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Killing, Combat and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry: Legendary Soldiers' Stories of the First World War – 1914-1918

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Abstract:

This study interrogates the stories and legends of six soldiers who served in the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry during the First World War, and the ways in which they described their primary occupation as soldiers, killing enemy combatants. It asks a fundamentally important question; how and why do men kill at war? Soldiers tended to narrate their descriptions of killing from the perspective of an innocuous reporter, and downplay their agency in the killing act. They also, often, framed their descriptions of killing in terms of revenge for the loss of comrades, or atrocities committed by the enemy. Alternatively, love for those same men and the love of women was given as the primary motivation for wanting to "stick it" at the front. Talbot Papineau breaks trench warfare down into three categories or "facts:" incidental, defensive, and offensive fighting. Killing existed in each of these categories, on a sliding scale of safety for the individual soldier, with incidental trench warfare being the safest and offensive warfare the most dangerous. Across all of these categories an important factor in triggering hot-blooded killing rage, what Shay called a "berserk state," was a soldier's perception of a betrayal of "what is right" or *thémis* by those who commanded them. When a soldier felt that something truly unfair had happened to him, he was much more likely to seek out contact with the enemy. Cold-blooded killing, that which epitomized the sniper's role during incidental fighting was presented in terms of familiar civilian pursuits that took on a different meaning during the war. Chief amongst them were hunting, working, and playing the game. The metaphor of the show was also an important way to describe battles with a familiar and innocuous phrase, and it had deep significance to the soldier's understanding of themselves in battle. First World War soldiers tended to characterize the killing with conspicuous silences and often sought to distance themselves, rhetorically, from the topic. As such the final two case-studies – those of J.W. "Jack" McLaren and V.F. Gianelli – will look at how men could write about their service with the front-line infantry without giving details of their primary occupation. This work attempts to look behind the curtain of soldiers' stories that have been enshrined in the official narrative of the PPCLI and inquire into what can be known about those parts of their stories that the men avoided telling, elucidating a fuller picture of their experiences and understanding of their legend.

For Patricia's; past and present.

And for *Elizabeth*; may she never know the truths of which I write, except in the pages of books – and may those books be well written and speak the truth.

And for Darcy; who brought me home.

Acknowledgements and Note on the Text:

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Throughout this paper the soldiers of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry will be referred to as "Patricia's." Within the regiment there are myriad acronyms and short forms used to describe the regiment and its soldier's (PPCLI, PP, VP, Pats, Pat's, Pat's Pets etc.), Patricia's however captures the idea that the unit was founded by the Patronage and graced with the name of a Princess, and that each of the regiment's soldiers were "hers" in some fashion. This is an important part of the regiment's self conception and longevity. I have chosen to use the descriptor throughout (except where another is obviously called for). Similarly, I have tried to use the phrase "battalion" when describing the Patricia's in the line, and "regiment" to discuss the wider regimental community including in England and Canada. The two terms are roughly synonymous.

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Chapter 1: Introduction – The Infantry Soldier has Many Jobs but Chief Amongst them is Killing

During the First World War, the infantry soldier was asked to do an almost unending litany of tasks *en route* to, at, and behind from the front-line. In training, he would, sooner or later, fill such diverse roles as button polisher, boot blacker, puttee roller, sock darner, route marcher, sentry, and rifleman. Finding food, and cooking or buying meals, for example, was always one of the principal occupations of the front-line soldier, including while in the trench lines. The Patricia H.P. Maddison recalls that, shortly after arriving at the front-lines, he decided to attempt to endear himself to his new section and “to help out with the crummy food, we got together and bought a coal-oil stove and a frying-pan. I cooked breakfast, etc. for the gang, and was rewarded by being named ‘Lizzie.’”¹ Maddison also remembers another Patricia, Jack Munroe, who once “crawled out into NO MAN’S LAND and dig up some potatoes growing there and boiled them in a billy can, then laid on a layer of bully beef on top of the potatoes and served them to his section.”² Long stretches of time went by without being afforded an opportunity. Food was a safe topic to reminisce about after the war, and an overarching concern in letters to family.³

Agar Adamson, like many of the officers and men of the regiment, was serviced with parcels sent by loved ones behind the lines. These packages contained everything from “potted tongue” to “an Easter Egg, a cake, a pair of socks and the revolver holster.” The latter he had asked for after being forced to abandon his kit, *in toto*, during his first tour of the front-line trenches. During that tour he had not eaten or slept, being forced to huddle under fire in deep frigid water for two days while the

¹ H.P. Maddison to Alex Rennie, 16 Feb 1976, 31(11)-9, PPCLI Archives, The Military Museums, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

² D.F. Parrott to Regt. Adj. V.D. Cole, MM, CD, 12 Jun 1975, 31(42)-9.

³ The best scholarly work on food during the war is Rachel Duffett, *The Stomach for Fighting: Food and the Soldiers of the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

Germans knocked down their parapet “inch by inch.”⁴ His wife, not versed in military matters, sent along the wrong holster and Adamson had to make her look again, “I hate to give you the trouble of going through my things again but the holster you sent me... will not hold the large Colt which I have now.”⁵ The provision of Adamson’s mess and the needs of his service as an officer leading his men to grips with the enemy were synonymous and both facilitated by Mabel, his loving and devoted wife residing at 16 Basil Mansions in London. The service of the soldiers’ stomachs and weapons were one and the same, the former giving him the strength to carry on with the work of the latter. Both were supported by the love of those at home, and the near presence of comrades suffering equally.

Every job the soldier did was connected in some capacity with killing the enemy, and Walter Draycot provides a perhaps uniquely ubiquitous version of this. During the war, he was employed as a sniper, barber, topographer, secret map copier, forward observation observer, and brigade intelligence officer, all while a private in the PPCLI (although he was eventually promoted to acting-sergeant). It was hard to be taken seriously, alone, at other brigade’s and divisional Head Quarters (HQ) with not so much as a lance-corporal’s stripe on his sleeve, and indeed he was detained as a spy on more than one occasion.⁶ His first semi-full-time job on top of his duties as an infantryman was that of barber, in which capacity he sheared the troops under fire and, like the Bruce Bairnsfather cartoon, once cut of a piece of the ear of frightened client.⁷ Later he was taken onto the regimental scouts by order of then

⁴ Adamson had been forced to cower in mud during a snowstorm with the men of his company. Ever concerned with how he would defend himself in the event of an attack, Adamson in concert with his men decided that “in the event of being attacked... we decided to scatter and lie in the water, doggo, to allow the Maxim to work.” He eventually crawled/swam out with his surviving men. “It was the most awful day I ever, ever put in; we could do nothing.” This was written almost concurrently with the first battalion trench raid of Feb 28th, 1915. See Chap 3, 4. Agar Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919*, ed., N.M Christie (Nepean: CEF Books, 1997), 2 March 1915, 30.

⁵ Ibid., 2 April 1915, 55

⁶ Walter Mackay Draycot, “Pawn No. 883: Being the Adventures of a Pawn of War in The Affair of 1914-18,” unpublished manuscript, 26-32-2, North Vancouver Museum and Archives.

⁷ He was appointed “Regimental Barber” on 19 October 1915, “Appeals were useless. It was an order, which like all orders, must be obeyed... Confound this straight-jacket method of ordering.” He reattaches the chunk of “fidgety Wallach’s” ear in January 1916. Ibid., 66, 77

Commanding Officer (CO) of the regiment, Colonel Buller, when he found out that he had been trained as a topographer in the King's Royal Rifle Corps (KRRC). He was later attached (loaned) to 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade HQ, and its commander Brigadier General A.C. Macdonell, with whom he became an intimate. Draycot remained on "Batty Mac's" staff for the remainder of his front-line service. His narrative demonstrates something of the many and varied killing situations that infantry soldiers found themselves in during the war, and the delicate calculus that went into deciding how to act in each.

The variety of often bizarre occupations, and the unspoken centrality of killing within the theatre of combat is also evident in the remembrances of Jack McLaren, a founding member of the PPCLI Comedy Company, and chief spokesman for it after the war. The genesis of the troop came from the oil paint that McLaren carried in his pack to execute topographical sketches, which Captain Agar Adamson had requested along with some songs after he received a letter from Professor James Mavor of the University of Toronto mentioning some landscapes that McLaren had sold: "They say there is a Field Marshalls' [sic] Baton in every soldier['s] pack sack. I emptied mine several times but never found one but I did have oil paints, brushes and canvas boards as well as some wigs, grease paint and sheet music – here lay the foetus in the womb, the embryonic... Canada Council [Comedy Company]."⁸ After performing in odd moments and places with his grease paint and wigs, McLaren "earned a little fame" and in late May 1916, through the patronage of the famous Adamson and then Commanding Officer Lieutenant-Colonel H.C. Buller (who was killed at Sanctuary Wood after lending Draycot to the 7th Brigade and just before the Company's first performance), a group of nine men were held out of the lines for a tour to write and rehearse their show.⁹ His appointment to the comedy company meant that he was able to ride out long stretches of the war wearing women's clothing, dancing, and singing to men who had only just returned from "shows" such as the horrifically costly defensive Battle of Sanctuary

⁸ J.W. "Jack" McLaren, "Speech to Montreal PPCLI Association: May 5 1961," 39(1)-1.

⁹ Ibid.

Wood/Mount Sorrel, and were likely on their way back to watch the effects of German munitions and their own in the near future.¹⁰

McLaren's occupation as an entertainer behind the lines stemmed from a more stridently aggressive toolset, and it did not preclude his re-entry into the front-lines when the need was dire. Moreover, McLaren's example demonstrates just one of many roles that soldiers filled which, although not actively employed killing the enemy, were integral to others' ability to do the same. The Comedy Company's performances behind the lines allowed the men of the audience to reconceptualise their reality in such a way that they would be able to return to the trenches, simultaneously mocking the absurdities of army life and society and reaffirming their motivations for being there in the first place. Every performance ended with a singing of God Save the King.¹¹

But for the variety of things that an individual might find himself doing at any given time, the infantry soldier had one overarching occupation and purpose: to kill the enemy, and facilitate his comrades in their efforts to do the same. Everything else in the soldiers' military existence is geared towards ensuring that the right men (and women in the modern context, but almost invariably not in the First World War context¹²) are positioned correctly with the right weapon systems, right leadership, right food, right boots, right socks, right haircut and right motivational attitude to maximize the damage done to the soldiers opposing them. It behoves every commander to realize that war is an extreme

¹⁰ Draycot also discusses the trope of wearing women's clothing to escape the war. It was something that a lot of men fantasized about doing, and its history in the Regiment predates the formation of the comedy company. Adamson, for example, relates the story of a "race meeting," a divisional riding competition, where some of the men of the PPCLI turned out "dressed as bride and groom. Very well made up, which gave some amusement. Also a transport horse all bandaged up and a man dressed as an old woman rode about and amused people doing a couple of jumps very well." Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 1 April 1915, 54.

¹¹ For example, McLaren recalls that the PPCLI Comedy Company greatly helped to restore the spirits of soldiers fresh from the fighting of the Somme in 1916. He recalls the CO of a dressing station adjacent to where they were performing telling them that "you boys are doing more for the troops than I can. Keep it up." J.W. McLaren, "Mirth and Mud, Part Two: Being another chapter from the tragically comic experiences of the P.P.C.L.I. concert party, entitled: Orphans are Orphans," *Maclean's Magazine*, 1 Mar 1929, 16.

¹² For a few counterexamples see, Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, (London: Granta, 1999), 306-344.

effort to be “fust thar with the most men” as Nathan Bedford Forrest is said to have said,¹³ and that accomplishing this is merely preliminary to firing the most ammunition upon the lately arriving enemy, killing and/or wounding them until or beyond the point that their capacity for resistance ends. The constant theme that underlays all the route marching, topographical sketching, cigarette-butt cleaning, and play-acting is the imperative of the soldier to kill. On both sides of the parapet, the message was the same. Inflict maximum damage and maximize the defence of your position and your men, trading the lives of the latter for the maintenance or improvement of the former. Do so because you are so commanded and because, for myriad reasons, you feel that you want to try your best.

War, to the Prussian martial philosopher Carl von Clausewitz, is “nothing but a duel on an extensive scale. If we would conceive as a unit the countless number of duels which make up a War, we shall do so best by supposing to ourselves two wrestlers. Each strives by physical force to compel the other to submit to his will... and thus render him incapable of further resistance.”¹⁴ Moreover, war tends towards extremes of force because it “is not the action of a living force upon a lifeless mass... but always the collision of two living forces.... So long as I have not overthrown my opponent I am bound to fear he may overthrow me. Thus I am not in control.”¹⁵ This leads, by necessity, to each side having to apply the “maximum exertion of strength” to completely disarm their enemy.¹⁶ All the miscellany of the soldiers’ existence is, from the commander’s point of view, geared towards moments of combat with the enemy. Thus, it seems only proper that this study should be focused upon those moments, and the enumeration and exploration of some of the countless duels that made up the First World War.

¹³ Wording from, “Forrest,” *The New York Times*, May 28th 1918. <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9907EFDE1238EE32A2575BC2A9639C946996D6CF> (31 July 2017).

¹⁴ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, (1832) 1989), 77.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Even at the front, men tasked with jobs other than trigger pulling were often as or more important to infantry killing as any given rifleman. Runners and signallers ultimately might hope to rain death down on enemy positions by reporting accurate information to higher HQ. During the Battle of Jigsaw Wood in 1918, John William Lynch – a signaller-*cum*-rifleman – was ordered by his Company Commander to establish a connection with Battalion HQ to pass a message detailing their position and that of the enemy: “We must get a message through... Our artillery must know our position at once, in case of counterattack.”¹⁷ While heliographing the message to the rear, Lynch found that signallers and signalling stations were prime targets for observed enemy artillery fire, which – in this case – “tripled in fury” after the “fellows across the river” saw their signals.¹⁸ He won the Military Medal (MM) for his successful transmission, and signallers, runners, and ammunition carriers were given missions that facilitated killing in much greater volume than any individual could (usually) take upon himself as a trigger-puller.¹⁹

Due to the special spatial realities of the Western Front during the First World War, most of the time that men spent at the front was spent in only incidental contact with the enemy, and man-to-man, face-to-face killing makes up a minority of cases: but, for the infantry soldier, these cases were his *raison d'être* for enduring the hell of war. Private Jack Munroe, the former heavyweight boxer and prospector, who had once stood in the ring with the great names of his day (including Jim Jeffries and Jack Johnson, amongst others), and who wired extra cans of bully beef underneath his webbing in the front-line, puts it succinctly when describing the Patricia’s stand at Frezenburg: “His job was to wound or kill – preferably to kill – every Hun he could wing in those waves of infantry that came successfully surging...

¹⁷ John William Lynch, *Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry 1917-19*, (New York: Exposition Press, 1976), 156.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 156-157.

¹⁹ Certain noteworthy actions by individuals, like Sergeant Mullin’s attack on the pill-box cluster at Meetcheele ridge, or Jim Christie’s career are the exceptions that prove the rule.

the job was done in a workmanlike manner.”²⁰ At the unit level, Munroe believed that the unwritten regimental “rule” was that “whenever you saw anything grey and moving you fire at it.”²¹ In a theme that will recur throughout the testimony here analyzed, Munroe describes killing at war as a job of work, or the most dangerous form of sport. Adamson, too, understood the war in gaming terms, and constantly referred to the first duty of the officer as knowing how to play the game. For Adamson, Munroe, and the Patricia’s, the war was “the greatest game in the world, and not for weaklings... War is not a pink tea.”²² In 1915 the men of the PPCLI had, to a man, been volunteers at or very near to the outbreak of war, “we wanted to be over here... and we’re here. So, for God’s sake, let’s not welch!”²³ Munroe even notes that the PPCLI took a grim pride in their casualties after entering a “quiet” section of the line near Armentières shortly after the decimation of the regiment at Frezenburg in the Ypres Salient: “[A] whole brigade had just occupied this trench for a week, and during that time it had suffered only four casualties. Whereupon the Pats, now only 250 strong, proceeded, on taking over that trench, to boost the proportion of casualties, to be suffered by themselves! Of course, however, they saw to it that plenty of reprisals were exacted.”²⁴ Controlled aggressiveness, the giving and taking of blows, somewhat akin to that of a boxer, is the portrait of the war that Munroe paints of combat with the German foe in his memoir.²⁵

²⁰ Lieutenant Jack Munroe, *Mopping Up! A Dog Story of the Princess “Pats”* (New York: The H.K. Fly Company, 1918), 253.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 273.

²² *Ibid.*, 102. Eksteins argues that the conceptualization of the war as a game continued to irk the French ever after the war. To them, “the British simply did not take anything seriously. ‘They consider the war a sport... [they are] too calm and inclined to a devil-gives-a-damn attitude.’” Modris Eksteins, *The Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 168.

²³ Monroe, *Mopping Up*, 102.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 271.

²⁵ Bidwell and Graham point out that Haig himself understood the final victory of November 1918 in similar terms. “Sir Douglas Hag described the Hundred Days... as the last round of a long contest in which the British Army gained a technical knock out. Its opponent was on the ropes but both fighters were exhausted... [the] British Army[’s] performance had been mainly responsible for compelling the Germans to negotiate.” Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *Fire-Power: British Army Weapons and Theories of War, 1904-1945* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1982), 131. McMeekin, in his work on the Ottoman Empire, perhaps unsurprisingly comes to a different conclusion

Unlike the company rifleman Munroe, the company officer Talbot Papineau did not seem to take pride in the Patricia's casualties suffered during enemy retaliations, or "replies," to their fire. He remembers one instance when his company "fired 4 grenades 'for fun' at night and the enemy replied with a very active rifle fire so that one of our best officers was killed a few moments later as he was leaving the trench. The exchange was invariably to our disadvantage."²⁶ Rifle grenades, a new tactical innovation, gave the infantryman the power to lob small explosives by firing a grenade propelled by the gasses of a blank round from an attachment to their rifle. Whereas Munroe suggests that the soldiers of the regiment were constantly on the lookout to take a shot at anything "grey and moving," Papineau believed that "hitherto" a continuous, desultory, "intermittent rifle fire" towards the enemy trenches had been carried on "both day and night, but especially at night," 90% of which was "not aimed at any special target."²⁷ Papineau decries the "waste of ammunition," and believes that fire should be "strictly controlled" by Officers and Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs).²⁸

Both Munroe and Papineau demonstrate how men came to understand that holding one's fire was often the safest course, and informal "live and let live" systems were the norm for long stretches of the war (although the PPCLI veterans here studied tended not to present themselves, at the battalion level, as willing to keep quiet for long). Officers and men both understood that the preservation of their own lives and that of their comrades was an overriding concern. As Tony Ashworth understands the situation, there was a "'profound difference' between the quiet sector and the active sector [and

– namely that Franchet d'Esperey's victory over the Bulgarians at Salonica in September 1918 was the first decisive strategic breakthrough of the war, and the death knell of the German war effort: "The Allies had blown a hole in the enemy line nearly 11 kilometers wide... By September 20, the break-out was 50 kilometers wide and just as far forward. Even as the Entente armies still faced the reputedly impregnable Siegfried line on the western front, in the east they had punctured a hole wide enough for an entire army to march through – whether north, into the Balkans and Central Europe, or east, where the right wing... could race across Thrace to Constantinople. It was the strategic breakthrough Churchill and Kitchener had dreamed of in vain at the Dardanelles." Sean McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908-1923* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 396-7.

²⁶ Talbot Papineau, "Part II Trench Warfare," unpublished manuscript, 161, 16(23.1)-1.

²⁷ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 113. Papineau, "Part III Trench Fighting," 2.

²⁸ Ibid., "Part III Trench Fighting," 1-3.

moving between them] was, therefore, the exchange of peace, according to the rules of live and let live on the former, and the exchange of aggression according to the rules of kill or be killed.”²⁹ The period that Munroe describes at Armentieres in 1915 saw a relatively fresh battalion keen to make its fighting presence known in a quiet sector. Bradford recalls his CSM, E. Cooper, who was nicknamed “the mad mullah” because of his “passionate desire to tangle with the Germans at any and all times.”³⁰ Note that the implication of Cooper’s nickname is that most, even in leadership positions, were not constantly on the lookout to “tangle” with the foe. Nevertheless, the regiment would find itself in many “active sectors” over the course of the war. Papineau, for his part, consistently emphasizes that fire must be strictly controlled, and only applied if there is a good possibility of causing enemy casualties.

The former Rhodes scholar, Captain Papineau, identified three major tactical categories in which fighting occurred on the Western Front as it existed and evolved from the time of his arrival in late 1914, to the time he composed his notes in early 1916. After two years at the front, Papineau meditated on how to make men more efficient at killing the enemy, and taking the ground that they held or holding the ground that they contested:

The subject divides itself naturally into three main facts. The first of these may be called Incidental Fighting or the activities of a mission whose purpose it is either to harry or weaken the enemy. And to defeat local hostile activities or to prepare a more favourable position for a future offensive. The second part may be called Defensive Fighting or the struggle to retain our line against a determined enemy attack. The third and final part which constitutes the

²⁹ Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1980), 19. Many have noted how infrequently opportunities to even see the enemy cropped up in an infantryman’s life at the front during the war. Ashworth, perhaps most saliently, argues that in “quiet sectors,” often a “live and let live” ethos defined the front-line soldier’s experience. He quotes Edmund Blunden’s *Undertone’s of War* “the observance of the ‘Live and Let Live principle, one of the soundest elements in the trench war... [a] rule which was ‘not invariably observed.’” Paddy Griffith may dismiss historians of Ashworth’s ilk as a “poetical,” but admits that, before the “larger second half of the war,” in which the BEF (of which the PPCLI was but one of many battalions) took a much greater part in the fighting, the British “engaged in major battle for little more than thirty days between the Christmas fraternisations of 1914, and 30 June 1916.” Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army’s Art of Attack 1916-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 32. From the regiment to the Corps, there were periods of relative calm and quiet, such as Draycot describes at Vimy in the winter 1917-18. Even during the second half of the war, long period of quiet occurred when the Corps itself was rotated out of the line or into a quiet sector. See Chapter 6.

³⁰ W.C.R. Bradford, “The Mad Mullah,” 1969, 31(2)-3.

culmination of our efforts is Offensive Fighting or the struggle to drive the enemy in defeat from their defensive positions.³¹

This is the basic truth of fighting on the Western Front: that men exist along a spectrum of danger, and that danger increased in each of the three conceptual categories, incidental fighting being the safest (most “live and let live”) and offensive fighting the most dangerous (most “kill or be killed”). Most of the time the regiment spent on the Western Front was spent in only incidental contact with the enemy. Here these men learned the skills they would need to kill the enemy in every phase of battle.

To understand how the war had developed into the stalemate which greeted the Patricia’s upon their arrival, one must understand how the German (and French) strategic plans failed to achieve the decisive victories that both had promised. Historians Barbara Tuchman and Holger Herwig both chart the course of the early battles and days of the war, and the failure of Schlieffen’s plan, coupled with the failure of the great counter-offensive at the Marne that would lead to the “gangrenous wound” of the trenches that stretched from Switzerland to the English Channel.³² Herwig finds that it was the failure of the British cavalry division to exploit the gap that developed between Kluck’s First Army and Bülow’s Second during the counter-attack at the Marne which allowed the Germans to regroup for the race to the sea; both sides believed that the temporary abatement which ensued was just that, temporary, and that they would regroup and push on towards victory.³³ In the end, Herwig finds that the ultimate tragedy of the titanic clash at the Marne “is that it was strategically indecisive,” meaning that, with the benefit of hindsight, a clear-cut victory for either side could at least have spared millions of men from the horror of the trenches.³⁴ This was the cause of the situation that the PPCLI encountered when they arrived at the front just before Christmas 1914, a situation which – as it turned out – they could do little

³¹ Papineau, “Trench Fighting,” 140-141.

³² Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Guns of August: The Outbreak of World War I* (New York: Random House, (1962) 2014), 482. Holger H. Herwig, *The Marne, 1914: The Opening of World War I and the Battle that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2009).

³³ Herwig, *The Marne*, 307.

³⁴ Ibid.

to alter for three and a half years. Well into 1915, Commanders on both sides of No Man's Land still thought the trenches to be merely a temporary inconvenience.³⁵ But the development of three interconnected and strongly constructed lines of fortifications defended by machine guns were simply too difficult to penetrate with sufficient surviving men exploit the success.³⁶ Papineau, from the company perspective, understood the vastness of the problem which confronted his men perhaps better than many of his most senior commanders.

During incidental fighting, the situation of siege warfare where keeping one's head down was an absolute necessity most of the time and a situation that the PPCLI were presented with due to the strategic stalemate at the Marne (which persisted over the following four years), killing largely became a specialist occupation.³⁷ Papineau understood that this type of warfare required a new skillset, such as a sniper's camouflage "colouring," an art that was mastered by the famous Patricia sniper Jim Christie. He

³⁵ Neiberg makes this point emphatically in his global history of the war. "In the early days of trench warfare on the western front... many officers saw trenches as a problem to be overcome, but certainly not an insurmountable one... The peoples and governments of the Allied nations expected their military minds, most of whom they still held in high esteem, to find a solution to the stalemate and liberate occupied regions. Trench warfare placed these men in increasingly unfamiliar intellectual terrain." Michael S. Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War: A Global History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), kindle loc. 714-717

³⁶ On the effect of the machine-gun on trench warfare see, John Ellis, *A Social History of the Machine Gun* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 111-148. Chivers, in his popular and important book points out that Ellis "excoriated Western officers for what would later be seen as monumental mental ignorance," and applied this as a "bromide" to his descriptions of machine gun killing during the war. He argues that Lloyd George had overridden the Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener's proposed number of guns per battalion, four, in June 1915, and increased the number "sixteenfold" (64). "Photographs taken of dead Highlanders lying in swaths in front of a single German machine gun on the battlefield of Loos... finally disposed of any qualms I may have had at having taken upon myself the responsibility for overriding military opinion." Lloyd George quoted in, C.J. Chivers, *The Gun* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 130-131.

³⁷ Adamson, too, understood the increasing killing specialization within the company, as well as the battalion. As he writes to Mabel, "It might interest you to know the composition of an Infantry Company... it so far has proved there are too many Special squads and not enough actual men to attack as pure and simple infantrymen, but when they do get into a trench the special men are often very useful... A Company now consists of 248 A.[II] R.[anks]... Each Platoon is divided into four sections... The left section of each Platoon consists of nothing but Grenadiers (men who throw bombs). One Platoon is always just behind the firing trench close up called the support Platoon and always held in immediate readiness to put up in case of attack. Every man in the whole company carries 2 bombs and knows how to throw them... 5 men in each section carry large wire clippers, 8 men carry special wire cutting gloves. The support Platoon carry loaded bludgeons... Besides this, we have two men told off to sound gongs during the day in the event of a gas attack and at night one of these men stands by ready to send off a signal rocket... You will see that we do not have a great number to do sentry work." Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 14 Feb 1916, 145.

believed that during the first two years of the war the Germans held a largely psychological advantage in this respect: "The British soldiers' fear of appearing ridiculous has prevented him from displaying an equal ingenuity, but the importance of this assimilation by colouring cannot be too much emphasised if effective sniping [is] to be done."³⁸ Effective sniping could be done either in front of, behind or – occasionally – in the front-line trench; this latter option was not preferred as across the whole interconnected mass of trenches that made up the Western Front, the other side did its best to keep that trench under constant observation. Christie understood that the camouflage of the sniper's position was paramount: "In old buildings it is harder to spot sniper if not shooting from front wall but rather back from wall and shooting through window, have hole disguised as much as possible. Service cap easily spotted, face should always be covered."³⁹ During incidental fighting the ability to remain invisible was all important.

He who held the high ground could pummel the right grid square with the right ammunition at the right time more effectively than his lower-lying enemy, and could also apply more sniper and machine-gun fire. One of Draycot's war stories illustrates this point. While executing a sketch of the German line near Hooze, Draycot had to contend with a German reinforced concrete observation post known as the "Bird Cage" that dominated the ground to the west of the Ramparts at Ypres: "Horror of Horrors! There was the Bird Cage – in full view! Stupefied, my blood froze at the sight. He could see me."⁴⁰ Draycot, slowly, like a "worm," crawled the fifty yards that intervened between his position and cover from observation: "The thought in my mind while crawling snail-like over those 50 yards was that of expectation – a bullet in the back!"⁴¹ The strongly held German observation posts that dotted the landscape around Ypres, and the entire Western Front, necessitated that men keep their heads down

³⁸ Papineau, "Part III Trench Fighting," 151-153.

³⁹ Jim Christie, "Ruby Diary," 10 Feb 1916, 31(28)-2.

⁴⁰ Draycot, "Pawn 883," 101.

⁴¹ Ibid.

and behind cover, especially during daylight. Failing that, one of the ever-watchful snipers ensconced in his “nest” would have another notch on his rifle.

The scale of the siege undertaken in Europe meant that the battles the regiment fought tended to be for small features and ridges that slightly dominated the flat rolling lands of Flanders and Northern France. Every major offensive and defensive battle that was waged seemed to be over a few hundred feet of elevation. During battle, the survivors of the killing barrage which preceded an advance would usually be presented with the persons of the enemy, and that is where killing tended to take place for the company infantryman. The PPCLI partook in many offensive and defensive battles, and although killing technology and doctrine changed greatly throughout the war, the message remained much the same, how do we kill them without all dying in the process? It was in battle that the half-answers that officers and men devised to this question during incidental fighting were forced by circumstance to face.

This study will endeavour to understand how the experience of killing was remembered by PPCLI infantrymen within Papineau’s three main “facts” of fighting, and develop cases which speak to how men spoke (or chose to remain silent) about killing. Historians look at meditated vice immediate texts, and this means that men’s remembrances of killing are – to a greater or lesser extent – edited creations. As such, literary tropes are just as important – if not more so – than substantive facts. Often the latter are immensely hard to differentiate from the former. It is perhaps amazing how sparingly these men referred to the act of killing in their anecdotes and remembrances. Often implied, actual accounts of the killing moments are few and far between. W.C.R. Bradford, for example, only brings the subject up directly in the context of his desire for revenge for the death of his younger brother, despite being under open arrest: “I worked my way back to the regiment in spite of the M.P.’s just to even up the score with a few [G]ermans. I am happy to report that they paid in full measure for that one.”⁴² At no point does he contextualize the fighting or give a description of it further than “I was one of the best

⁴² W.C.R. Bradford to W.E. Bastedo, 5 Aug 1964, 31(2)-3.

shots in the regiment and I can say this without boasting.”⁴³ Men tended to be circumspect in their descriptions of killing the enemy.

The act of storytelling is a fictive act, and every one of the soldiers here studied was writing with an audience in mind. It is important that Jack Munroe chooses to narrate his story from the perspective and with the voice of his dog, Bobbie Burns, and it is also important that his narrative was published *during* the war, when Munroe was actively engaged in recruiting Americans to the Canadian Expeditionary Force. With the passage of the Selective Service Act (1917) the draft was coming in the United States and Munroe, as a member of the British Canadian Recruiting Mission based in New York, were trying to recruit British expatriates and men who would otherwise be drafted into American units.⁴⁴ His text, like McCrae’s “In Flanders Fields,” is thus in large part a rallying cry, and it draws on other tropes, truths, and fictions in pursuance of the goal of enlisting men into the CEF.⁴⁵ Munroe provides one of many examples that prove the importance of understanding the context surrounding the authorship of text and the creation and perpetuation of symbolism and myth. History – especially in the form of memoir – tends to be experienced wholly in the present. The present which embodies the soldier memoirist is necessarily different than the past that he experienced and is remembering.

Although infantry killing occurred during each of Papineau’s “three facts” of fighting, most killing during the First World War was not caused by the infantry, but by the artillery. A statistical analysis by the Royal Army Medical Corps completed after the war found that, of 212,659 cases admitted to casualty clearing stations, 58.5% (124,425) were caused by shells and trench mortars whereas 38.9%

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Dorothy Farmiloe, *The Legend of Jack Munroe: A Portrait of a Canadian Hero* (Windsor, Ontario: Black Moss Press, 1994), 187-198. On the history of the British Recruiting Mission (BCM) and later British Canadian Recruiting Mission (BCRM) at the time Munroe was active recruiting see, Richard Holt, “Filling the Ranks: Recruiting, Training and Reinforcements in the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918,” PhD dissertation, the University of Western Ontario, 2 vols., 2012, 1:243-251.

⁴⁵ A discussion of McCrae’s poem as recruiting propaganda is undertaken in Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 249-250.

(82,901) were caused by bullets (either rifle or machine gun), and a mere .32% (684) were caused by bayonets.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the infantry was the only arm that could take ground (especially when supported by tanks and, occasionally, cavalry). As Aaron Miedema argues, “in spite of historical derision, the bayonet was one of the most important weapon systems of the war, and was one of the foundations on which doctrine and technological change were built.”⁴⁷ Considering the prevalence of accounts of bayonet fighting amongst soldiers’ histories of the war, Miedema finds that the bayonet had its time and place as an effective killer-of-men during the war.⁴⁸ The low numbers of bayonet wounds can be explained by the fact that the study covered a period which not propitious for bayonet fighting (early 1916), and by the fact that bayonets seldom wounded: at least, if the soldier had gained enough of an appreciation of the tactic from the sixty hours of training for it that he underwent.

The omnipresence of the great “wounder” of the war, shell-fire, was such that soldiers developed a wholly new lexicon to describe it. Coal boxes, whiz bangs, Jack Johnsons, flying pigs (Trench Mortars), and sausages came to represent the products of the giant German munitions industry, as if by giving something a nickname one can take away some of the fear associated with that thing. The

⁴⁶ T.J. Mitchell and G.M. Smith, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: Medical Services Casualties and Medical Statistics of the Great War* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1931), 40. Griffith points out that men tended not to make it to the dressing station if wounded by the bayonet, and that although, “there is little evidence that much true bayonet fighting ever took place... or that the percentage of casualties attributable to bayonets was ever anything but negligible. Nevertheless, an appeal to the bayonet could often be a highly effective spur for troops who might otherwise hesitate... The perfectly simple logic behind appeals to the bayonet has nevertheless repeatedly been obscured and denied.” Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*, 100-101. Macphail uses the words “bayonets” as a marker for rifleman or infantry, summing up their occupation in the one weapon. “Praise so lavish and so indiscriminating has been bestowed upon the Canadian Corps that its real excellence is yet unknown. Persons with knowledge remained silent lest they might appear to swell the fulsome chorus and do further injustice to the other corps engaged... General Currie... [had] made the important discovery that forty bayonets is at all times the correct complement of a platoon, no more, no less. That four platoons form a company; and four companies a battalion with 640 consequent bayonets.” Macphail, Sir Andrew, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919: The Medical Services* (Ottawa: F.A. Acland – Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1925), 376. See also, Mark Harrison, *The Medical War: British Military Medicine in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For British battle and non-battle casualties by type see, David Stewart, James Fitzgerald, and Alf Pickard, *The Great War: Sources and Evidence* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1995), 103, 107.

⁴⁷ Aaron Miedema, *Bayonets and Blobsticks, the Canadian Experience of Close Combat 1915-18* (Kingston: Legacy Books Press, 2011), 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 43-86.

artilleryman's trade is one of "feeding" guns, and the resultant killing is scarcely if ever witnessed by the gunners themselves (although Forward Observation Officers may be more directly responsible for taking life than any other actor on the battlefield).⁴⁹ As we have seen in Lynch's case, and will see in Draycot's, effective coordination and communication between the infantry and the artillery could greatly increase the ability of the latter to slaughter the enemy. Nevertheless, face-to-face killing was almost strictly the purview of the infantryman during the war.

Gas was a new and terrible killer on the Western Front, and much has been written on the evolution of gas-warfare as an element of trench soldiering. Infantryman, although using gas to support attacks, seldom projected the noxious fumes of war, themselves, upon the enemy. They tended to be circumspect in any praise of the effectiveness of gas, and often decry the newfound horror that it engendered. Nevertheless, men were told that they had to stand their ground against gas the same as they had against more traditional forms of "fire-power."⁵⁰ Often the target of gas, especially in the early

⁴⁹ The actor and brother of a future Governor-General, Raymond Massey, remembers his experiences during the war as a forward observer in his memoir. Manning his battery's forward "O Pip" or Observation Post, he was surveying a pile of rubble that housed a German machine gun position. "I saw a tall figure in a long greatcoat walking down the road. Although he was six hundred yards from me, I could see through my telescope that he wore a monocle and, as his coat was open, the ribbon of the Iron Cross in his jacket buttonhole. He stopped at a pile of rubble we had registered as a machine gun post. He stood there peering at our front line, an audacity that was scarcely believable. I couldn't understand why our snipers hadn't picked him off. I ordered number one gun to stand to, gave the target number, and ordered one round of high explosive. The tall officer stood their motionless. I heard the shell whining overhead. It was right on target. There was a burst of yellowish smoke and rubble – and no tall officer. I don't know if it got him but I felt rather sick. Some people said the field artillery was an impersonal service." Massey also recalls an obverse occurrence where a visit of the staff to his O Pip had led to a retaliation that very nearly killed him. Raymond Massey, *When I was Young* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, (1976) 1983), no page numbers, chap. 18.

⁵⁰ On the Canadian example see, Tim Cook, *No Place to Run: The Canadian Corps and Gas Warfare in the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999). Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 29-30, 34. For the wider British example, see, Griffith. He notes that the BEF's Special Gas Brigade prided itself on inflicting, proportionally, the most casualties on the enemy of any individual unit. "The Infantry lost one casualty for every 0.5 it caused, with an average loss during the war of 200 per cent of each division's starting strength, including perhaps 600 per cent in 'élite' battalions... The artillery lost one casualty for every 10 it caused, with an average loss of forty per cent of each unit's starting strength. The Special Gas Brigade lost one casualty for every 40 it caused, with a turnover of 100 per cent of its starting strength during the war." Griffith, *Battle Tactics*, 70. See also, C.H. Foulkes, *"Gas!" The story of the Special Brigade* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1934), 304-318. For gas warfare during the war as a whole see, L. F. Haber, *The Poisonous Cloud: Chemical Warfare in the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

years of its battlefield deployment (before counter-battery fire became a priority, although counter-infantry fire was still, also, a priority), the regular “line” infantryman seldom took any part in its deployment, and as our focus is on the *infantryman* as killer, gas warfare is not here focused upon. Despite the blinding sickening horror of chlorine, phosgene, and mustard gas, the infantry officers demanded the same discipline of men under gas attack as under any other circumstance.⁵¹

Although the great casualty-causer of the war was certainly artillery, most soldiers who served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force did so as infantrymen. Fully 63.2% (378,070) of soldiers in the CEF

Ludwig Fritz Haber is the youngest son of the inventor of poison gas, and the man who was ultimately responsible for unleashing the first chlorine attack at Ypres, Fritz Haber. On Haber at Ypres see, Dietrich Stoltzenberg, *Fritz Haber: Chemist, Nobel Laureate, German, Jew* (Philadelphia: Chemical Heritage Foundation, 2004), 137-75. See also, Daniel Charles, *Master Mind: The Rise and Fall of Fritz Haber, the Nobel Laureate Who Launched the Age of Chemical Warfare* (New York: Ecco, 2005), 141-187. Haber’s wife Clara committed suicide shortly after the gas attacks.

⁵¹ A. Sydney Bruneau, a member of the 1st University Company and early Patricia reinforcement writes vividly of a suspected gas attack on a thinly defended sector of the then quiet Somme front (near the village of Frise) in September 1915. “The 1915 Somme was a very different show from that of a year later... The regiment, still considerably below strength in spite of the arrival of the first two University Companies, was responsible for a mile and a quarter of front line. There were no support and reserve trenches... sentry posts were as far as a hundred yards apart... Whatever the faults of our position from a military point of view, there was no doubt about its comfort... in [our flimsy dugout] we had a stove, with coal available from an abandoned factory nearby... We slept on spring mattresses, we ate off excellent china dishes, we even had roses on our table... What a jolly crowd [we] were! We could not have wished for better companions. There were seven or eight of us all chatting happily at our sentry post, smoking our cigarettes and enjoying their cheering glow in the gathering darkness... when a strange cowed figure ran sharply into [us] and we realised with a start that he was wearing a gas helmet. ‘God damn it, what’s the matter?’ Rolly asked him, and we heard the muffled voice of Corporal Rawsthorne ‘Put on your f[ucking] helmets.’... Only that afternoon Sergeant McLean had issued the new improved gas-helmets, but they were anywhere except where they should have been.” In the end, the cause of the alarm had been a sanitary man, “Corporal Chloride... with his assistant Jummy Underdown” had given an “unusually generous” dose of chloride of lime in the latrines. But the psychological ramifications of the incident were deep. “Fancy had played some tricks even with the seasoned veterans, for Corporal Rawsthorne had seen a line of men coming across in extended orders just before the all clear signal... More disquieting was the case of one cocky recruit who had always expressed himself with great authority of military matters. He had felt the gas seeping through his helmet and begged permission to go back to the rear which Sergeant McLean had refused.” A. Sydney Bruneau, “The Gassing of No. 6 Platoon,” 2-6, 31(14)-2. Here McLean did his duty in refusing permission to retire. As Papineau wrote, “The effect of a gas preparation upon troops who are properly protected is more moral than material. The thought of death by a slow, inexorable and painful suffocation is much more terrifying than the expectation of death by wounds. Troops who would not flinch before any human antagonists or who would hold their ground amidst a very tempest of shells will be very inclined to bolt before that sickening and menacing cloud of gas --- rolling irresistibly towards them.” Nevertheless, Papineau summarizes, effective countermeasures being in place, “all ranks must be made to realize that to withdraw from a gas attack is as cowardly as retreat before infantry and subject to the same penalties.” Papineau, “Trench Fighting,” 247-9. Both Papineau and Bruneau come to the same conclusion about the necessity to stand before gas attacks, and both discuss gas in the same fearful terms, evoking the panic that it could cause.

were members of infantry battalions.⁵² Each man was armed with a rifle, and his primary responsibility was to “annoy, upset and kill the enemy.”⁵³ In the infantryman’s case, that responsibility was usually to be undertaken at a range that did not extend much beyond 300 yards (Christie records that 200 yards or less is the ideal distance for a sniper to engage a target).⁵⁴ Technological innovations, especially bombs, machine-guns, grenades, rifle grenades, and trench mortars, changed the way that killing looked and felt to the infantryman, but did not much extend that range past 400 yards (with the exception of indirect machine-gun fire performed by specialized machine-gun companies at Brigade and higher formations that employed the same principles as artillery).⁵⁵ This range is about as far as the human eye could usefully distinguish targets, and in the trenches, seeing often led to being seen which was exceptionally lethal.

The infantryman’s weapons, apart from the machine-gun in an indirect role, remained relatively close-range tools and killing was accomplished with the rifle, the bomb, and the bayonet, when one could see the enemy with one’s own eyes. As Lieutenant-Colonel Hugh Niven wrote in correspondence with the commanding officer of the PPCLI in 1961, “if you can spot an enemy at 2-300 yards and be absolutely sure of hitting him, you win a lot of wars.”⁵⁶ In offensive or defensive conflict on a variety of scales, bombs were the most ubiquitous weapon of the infantryman. But machine guns, rifle-grenades, rifles, bayonets, pistols, billy clubs, and perhaps even axes were used to kill men in certain circumstances.⁵⁷ Certainly, the most efficient killer at the front was the machine-gun, the ubiquity of

⁵²Holt, “Filling the Ranks,” 1: Table 13, 119, 125-145.

⁵³ Kenneth Radley, *Get Tough Stay Tough: Shaping the Canadian Corps 1914-1918* (Toronto: Helion and Company, 2014), 98.

⁵⁴ “Best ranges up to 200 yards.” Christie, “Ruby Diary,” 29 Jan 1916, 31(28)-2.

⁵⁵ On the evolution of machine-gun tactics within the Canadian Corps, see Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*, 115. On the evolution of the British Machine Gun Corps and British machine-gun tactics see, Griffith, *Battle Tactics*, 159-177.

⁵⁶ Hugh Niven to Brigadier General Cameron Ware, 25 Oct 1961, 31(53.2)-9.

⁵⁷ On close combat see, Miedema *Bayonets and Blobsticks*, 43-86.

which so fundamentally changed the face of warfare during the First World War generally and the Western Front specifically.

Nevertheless, hand-to-hand combat, especially during successful offensive action, did occur and was often a fixture of veterans' battle narratives, and especially those of hyperbolic press accounts. During the pre-assault bombardment of the battalion's position during the second phase of the Battle of Second Ypres, Adamson wrote to his wife that the regiment's situation was dire and that the Germans were "having the best of it" by seizing commanding terrain and having an overwhelming superiority in artillery. "We moved up last night from our support dugouts, having been fairly well shelled. Gow (Lieut.) shot badly, was alive when we left, 4 men killed, 9 wounded and 2 went mad, 6 in what is called 'in a state of collapse,' ... I forgot if the baseball bats did arrive back at the transport, they could very well have been used here as a weapon of defence, when our ammunition runs out."⁵⁸ Sometimes these accounts capture a hitherto unpalatable truth, that men did beat each other to death because they felt they needed to. In battle, it was kill or be killed, no matter what else it was. The problem was getting enough men who were not too wounded to carry on at the critical point at the critical moment. It has always and will always be thus in war. The fact that Adamson links the bludgeoning to a gift his wife sent the regiment for "games" behind the lines reinforces how men understood killing in gaming terms.

During trench warfare, men very seldom were afforded the opportunity to kill; there were too many other things to do and a powerful disincentive to break cover even momentarily. Nevertheless, all of those in an infantry battalion rotating into and out of any given sector of the line were constantly engaged in the occupation of attempting to end the lives of those who opposed them. Some, through skill at arms, temperament, or situation, sought out the opportunity to kill, and often described it as the most dangerous possible form of sport, a sport that ultimately and all but inevitably destroyed the hunter as well as his prey. This destruction could be mental, moral, or mortal. But very often, these

⁵⁸ Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 7 May 1915, 73.

men survived and reconstructed themselves to a greater or lesser extent after the war. Sometimes they could not reconstruct themselves, and the true tragedy of the war did not unfold until after its conclusion.

Revenge and moral indignation were powerful motivators during battle, and powerful mechanisms to explain the killing afterwards; both were given contextually as the hot-blooded motivation to kill. Repeatedly we see men contextualize and remember their experiences against the backdrop of the death or grievous injury of one's own comrades, especially close friends or "clean-living" young men. Alternatively, the death of a near relation, especially a brother, or the sight of wounded, maimed or killed "innocents" – civilians, and especially women and children – seemed to make men want to kill. This type of killing usually occurred during offensive or defensive battle, when one side had gone over the top *en masse* to attempt to take enemy held ground. The period in which these men would have seen their enemy was short, and (inevitably) presaged on both sides by as intense a bombardment as the other could muster. To paraphrase Stewart, a successful infantry advance led to "interstitial moments" when neither side could bombard the other for fear of hitting their own men, and the barrages lifted to rear areas attempting to interdict reinforcements and thus trapping the survivors within the battlespace.⁵⁹ That is when infantry killing happened, and the survivors of the barrage could be counted upon to have their blood up and seek out the enemy and an opportunity to kill them. This was also when men needed to fight forward (or defend) with their own firepower. It was also when comrades tended to be killed, and – during defensive battle – when civilians tended to get maimed. Thus, it is no surprise that we see a consequent, retaliatory killing rage rising in the surviving soldiers on the battlefield.

⁵⁹ William Stewart, "Deployment to Employment: The Introduction of New Infantry Weapons in the Canadian Corps," Vimy 2017: From Both Sides of the Ridge, Centre for Military, Strategic and Security Studies (CMSSS) conference notes, 21 April 2017. See also, Bidwell and Graham, *Fire-Power*, 94-131.

It was only seldom that either side was actively going over the top, and the other “cold blooded” trend of killing narrative usually existed in what Papineau described as “incidental” fighting. This was often carried out by specialists (usually snipers), although company men were also given to firing at the enemy, and to taking part in trench raids where killing was usually the first and most important objective. Cold-blooded killing is usually described in terms of hunting, sport, or simple work, a necessary occupation that the men had volunteered to accomplish. During incidental combat, however, men tended to be employed on myriad tasks other than the killing itself (although all aimed to support it). Killing during incidental fighting tended to be retaliatory and often voluntary, as enemy action necessitated a response. Papineau has it that offensive (non-retaliatory) action during incidental fighting should be carefully weighed against the inevitability of an enemy reaction. It was best not to start something if you did not have sufficient munitions, positions, or support to finish it by achieving local fire superiority. As we will see, the men of the Patricia’s had already volunteered to fight and usually remembered themselves as willing to undertake any offensive action that held a reasonable probability of their immediate survival. The two chief strains of contextualizing descriptions of killing, hot-blooded and cold-blooded, are never wholly separate and often those who had mastered the skills required to be a cold-blooded killer (chief amongst them marksmanship) would distinguish themselves by their prowess in the hot-blooded action of open battle.

The necessity to kill exists as the subtext of much of the veterans’ memoirs here studied but often, in fact usually, remains an unspoken truth. By focusing on hitherto unexplored material, primarily (but not exclusively) monograph-length memoirs, we can begin to chart some of the ways that men spoke about, and – often as importantly – chose not to speak about, their primary occupation at the front, killing enemy combatants lest they or their friends are killed (or in retaliation for the latter). Soldiers were often quick to underplay their agency as killers on the Western Front, but, as we will see, pride in the exclusivity of being in a “fighting” regiment underpins their writings and remembrances of

the war. Certainly, not every soldier became a killer during the war; many were wounded or killed without getting so much as a chance to see the enemy. Even when a given veteran chose to remain silent on the facts of his combat experience, killing is as often addressed in those calculated gaps as through conspicuous remembrance.

Men tend to describe killing within the context of what Jonathan Shay called the betrayal of *thémis*.⁶⁰ Very often it was the sight of the death of a close comrade that seemed to betray the survivor's sense of "what is right" and led to their transformation into "berserck" killers. This grief was a fundamental motivator during combat and had long lasting ramifications. A recent study has found that the grief experienced over the loss of a comrade in combat is more deeply felt thirty years after the fact than the bereavement felt over the loss of a spouse within the last six months.⁶¹ Alternatively, the betrayal of a sense of fairness by the military institution which commanded these men could also lead directly to the entry into a berserk state and a desire to seek out the enemy to kill him.

As will be demonstrated, the berserk state (the etymology is Norse and describes "the frenzied warriors who went into battle naked, or at least without armor, in a godlike or god-possessed – but also beastlike or savage – fury") seems to fit the descriptions of many soldiers in the First World War.⁶² Shay

⁶⁰ Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Scribner, 1994), 25.

⁶¹ Ilona Pivar, and Nigel Field, "Unresolved grief in combat veterans with PTSD," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 18 (2004), 751. N. P. Field and M.J. Horowitz, "Applying an empty-chair monologue paradigm to examine unresolved grief," *Psychiatry*, 61 (1998), 279-287.

⁶² Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 77. Like Shay, Gray likens behaviour in battle to a descent into beast fury, arguing that the soldier thus became less of a man in the upright sense of the term, and is transformed into "*Homo Furens*. This is surely part of what it means to be a soldier, and what it has always meant... Man as warrior is only partly a man, yet, fatefully enough, this aspect of him is capable of transforming the whole." J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (Lincoln, Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press, (1959) 1998), 27. Arendt makes the point that Gray's book makes clear that "soldiers who cherished concrete emotions found the moral atmosphere at the front so much more endurable than in rear areas that they willingly accepted the greater strain and personal dangers of combat...and that the loyalty to the group 'is the essence of fighting morale.' This self-taught concreteness, an unswerving fidelity to the real, as difficult to achieve for the philosopher, whose formal education had been abstract thought, as for the common run of men who indulge in no less abstract feelings and emotions, is the hallmark of the singularly earnest and beautiful book." As she writes in her own treatment of state violence, "In collective violence its most dangerously attractive features come to the fore... It is perfectly

argues that this universal truth of war existed as long ago as the war Homer describes: “After Patroklos’s death, Achilles... ‘lost it.’ ... What did Achilles lose? I believe that the veterans and Homer shared similar views on this subject. In the veteran’s own words, they lost their humanity. Beast-god and god-beast replaced human identity.”⁶³ Lynch describes one such moment at Jigsaw Wood narrated by his friend McGuire who had seen their mutual friend Boyce and an officer killed: “Seeing them killed like that drove me out of my head. I was crazy when we rushed that pillbox. Nothing but a burst of bullets could have stopped me. I have seen plenty of men killed but nothing before got under my skin like seeing those two go.”⁶⁴ Lynch felt the loss more keenly than if Boyce had, “been my own brother.”⁶⁵ He wrote those words over half a century after his friend had been killed.⁶⁶ As we will see, revenge was the most common motivator for berserk “hot-blooded” killing during the war.

Many describe killing as a joyful or deeply satisfying act, especially in publications printed for public consumption during the war.⁶⁷ It had to be understood and reinforced that killing was what the infantryman did while at the front, and that the deaths of so many of the names which filled pages of newspaper across the country were avenged. For example, a contemporary publication describing the nocturnal activities of a company of infantry details how killing was a voluntary and satisfying act: “The men are numbered off in threes from the flank, and one of the three watches for two hours, while the

true that in the military as well as revolutionary action ‘individualism is the first [value] to disappear.’” Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1969), 67. See also Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1968), preface. On the deconstruction of human identity in war see Leed, who argues that the war broke down every conceivable aspect of the offensive personality within the individual, and the warriors thus found themselves: “Soldiers without pleasure in warring, they wait. For what? Nothing and everything, for death can bury them here during this desolate assignment without their testing their own strength against it; death is as if oblivious, mindless. It does not want their courage . . . for in this war it demands a harder virtue.” Eric J. Leed, *No Man’s Land: Combat & Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 111-113. True in the aggregate, there was a time when the waiting stopped for the infantry: going over the top, or having the other side come to you. In either case, if one survived long enough he would have a chance to prove his agency, often many chances.

⁶³ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 82.

⁶⁴ Lynch, *PPCLI*, 142.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁶⁷ Bourke, *Intimate History of Killing*, 168-9.

others work filling sandbags, repairing parapets, and strengthening entanglements. Every half-hour the N.C.O. on duty creeps around to report, to post, or to relieve; all this is done stealthily and with amazing economy of speech. Also at night some of the men develop the most primitive of all instincts, and crawl out on their stomachs with a hand grenade, to taste the joy of killing.”⁶⁸ The document was a school primer on the war published by the Ontario Department of Education.

Soldiers’ idle barroom conversations, so frequent in their lives, are seldom recorded in any detail by participants. These were the types of conversations where men tended to speak about the fighting, killing, and dying. Often these conversations were characterized as “story-time” when an older experienced soldier would hold court for newly arrived recruits and younger soldiers. Eric Knight, a Patricia who served with the regiment through Passchendaele, records something of what those conversations may have sounded like. In a novel published against the then contemporary backdrop of the very real threat of Nazi invasion in 1941, Knight drew heavily on his own experiences during the war to imagine his protagonists discussing the ethics and motivations of men to kill. Monty, the experienced old hand at war, believed that a soldier could endure the hell of war, and inflict killing damage for two reasons:

When you’re a soldier you’ve only got two things to believe in—to take pride in yourself for being a clean soldier, and to think your regiment can knock the ears off of any other that ever lined up on parade. Oh maybe you’ve got the wind up a bit, but then you laugh and say: “Well, any bloody band o’ jam-wallahs can pull out and keep on going; but you’ve got to have a regiment of real troops to stay behind and stick it. That’s what I figure is the big thing the British nation’s got, if you come right down to it. We can stick it. We can stand up and stick it better than any other bloody nation on the earth.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Ontario Department of Education, *Canada’s Part in the Present War* (Toronto: A.T. Wilgress, 1918), 55.

⁶⁹ Eric Knight, *This Above All* (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1941), 234. Jam-wallahs were new troops who ate the jam (or the supply troops who carried it to them), which was scoffed at by the older, prewar imperial soldiery of the BEF generally and PPCLI specifically. Together with the phrase “got the wind up,” jam-wallahs is emblematic of the time and all but lost in the modern context.

This is the same promise that Victor Gianelli made to his parents when he enlisted in the Patricia's in the summer of 1917, that he would "stick" and "try to do the right thing always."⁷⁰ This same point Knight makes about regimental loyalty is also made by no less an authority than Sir Garnet Wolseley: "The soldier is a peculiar animal that can alone be brought to the highest efficiency by inducing him to believe that he belongs to a regiment which is infinitely superior to the others around him... Colonels are greatly aided by being able to point to some peculiarity in dress or title."⁷¹

Knight points out another important aspect of killing in warfare, that individual agency tends to be dismissed in the historiography of war, which often subsumes the individual into a narrative of hierarchical units and a clear-cut description of the action. For the man doing the fighting, however, the picture looked much different. As Monty tells his comrade Clive (and his girlfriend Prue) "I picked up a book about the last war once. About scraps I'd been in myself. Why, it would make you laugh to read it. It was all too cut and dried. Not like it happened at all."⁷² For Knight, "what soldiers know and historians don't" is that "the first duty of a general is to keep his reputation alive, and the first duty of a soldier is to keep himself alive."⁷³ But that statement is tempered against the fact that men may choose to fight or run away, and it is well nigh impossible to foresee which they will do and when:

"Sooner let it be said: 'There goes a live coward' than 'here lies a dead hero,' eh?" "Dead heroes don't fire guns. While a live coward can chuck a bomb tomorrow." "If he was a coward yesterday, why should he fight today?" Prue asked. "Ah, now y're asking something," Monty said. "Nobody knows what makes a chap run one day and fight another. I've seen 'em do both—and I've done both myself. Mostly, a chap fights because of one of two things. He's got to fight or be killed—or he can see some sense to what he's doing."⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Victor Gianelli to family, 10 July 1917, 31(18.1-18.16)-5.

⁷¹ Garnet Wolseley, *The Soldier's Pocket-Book for Field Service*, 2nd ed. (London: Clowes and Sons, 1871), 4.

⁷² Knight, *This Above All*, 233-4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* On the question of courage in battle which Knight raises, there is an extensive historiography. Probably the most famous describer of trench courage to emerge from the war was that of Charles Wilson (who was later created the 1st Baron Moran), and who sought after the war to explore what the war had taught of man's struggle with fear. In one vivid passage he points out that it was only the bond of mutual suffering that made it all worthwhile, and an understanding of an unpalatable truth and one which was carefully hidden by the press from the public at large. Describing a German Trench raid "opposite the Loos salient" on 5 Jan 1917, he describes how the facts changed in the telling. "*Times*. January 6th. *German Raiders near Loos – Heavy Trench Fighting...* Early this

It was often impossible for the soldier to perform his first duty, to keep himself alive, and there was an ever-present reality that he – through no fault of his own – would lose his life despite his best efforts. It is an odd dichotomy that Knight sets up, but one that recurs throughout much of the testimony we will here encounter. In the end, as Knight's character Clive argues, "Individual men reason it out, and when it gets to the point that individual men can see no more sense to the way their lives are being used—then the war's over." Monty agrees with this assessment: "If you've got to be killed you want some sense to it."⁷⁵ That is the secret to warfare: men must believe in it for it to succeed.

Men did believe in these reasons to fight and kill, on and off, and it was especially hard to shake their faith during the war. Draycot made the landscape of war into a uniquely deadly art, McLaren a leavening satire, Christie pushed himself to hitherto undreamed-of levels of stealth and sharpshooting, Munroe – after he lost the use of his arm – shouted to anyone who would listen that the war was worth

morning a hostile raiding party succeeded in entering our trenches south of Loos. Heavy fighting ensued and the enemy was speedily driven out, leaving a number of dead in our trenches. Some of our men are missing—' Readers of *The Times* would scarcely deduce from this that the Boche stayed forty minutes in our trenches extracting fifty-one prisoners from the deep dug-outs in the support line of the battalion on our right, that a corporal and two men stuck to a machine gun otherwise there was little fight shown, and that subsequently after a court of enquiry the officer commanding this battalion was removed from his command... The censor may have to draw his blue pencil through the truth for more reasons than one. Those who are compelled to be spectators might take hardly the tale of what actually happens in war. Stories like Loos are only tolerable because the same thing might befall the listener at any time. It made all the difference when a man could not share the fruits of incompetence." Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (London: Carroll & Graf, (1945) 2007), 73-74. Miller's discussion of the "good coward" is reminiscent of Knight's description of courage in the Civil War context. He points out that casualties amongst front-line infantry were so high that those with long service were instantly famous within the regiment, quoting Wilfred Owen's description of a "fellowship of only survivors." William Ian Miller, *The Mystery of Courage* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 1-5, 18. According to Linderman, courage was at the core of the identity of the individual soldier during the American Civil War. For the enlisted man this consisted of the ability to "wait stoically through the tense and difficult period just prior to battle; to stand and receive enemy fire without replying to it...; and to resist all urges to quicken their pace under fire, to dodge or duck shells, or to seek cover." The burden was greater for officers, who had to do all of that and "impress [their] courage, less by stoic endurance than by positive demonstration." This description sounds similar to many of the stories that we will here encounter. Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 15. On how soldiers created and defined "safe spaces" for themselves to endure the interminable waiting under fire see, Tim Cook, "Spacial Sanctuaries and Normalizing Violence: The Canadian Soldier on the Western Front during the Great War," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'Études Canadiennes* 49, no. 3 (2015): 5-18.

⁷⁵ Knight, *This Above All*, 233.

fighting and that it had more to do with love than with hate. Love and land made them believe in war, or rather that the war was worth fighting. The entire popular culture of the belligerent societies that sent men to the First World War tended to emphatically support the war, and shaped soldiers' descriptions during it.⁷⁶ Women played a critical role in this portion of men's motivation to fight as those men who volunteered usually described themselves as "real men" who had, through their service, proven themselves worthy of the love of any woman or women that they sought. This motivational and ideational conception of the soldier to himself and to his society tends to recur throughout the veteran testimony here studied.

There is another, more ironclad motivation for men to "stick it" and fight and kill under their commander's orders, namely that the military's monopoly on lethal violence applies also to men within its own ranks. Discipline is absolute, if it comes down to it, and men could be broken in spirit and body by military law as much as by enemy ordinance. Shay, discoursing on Clausewitz, puts it thus:

The struggle to dominate the will... is *reciprocal*. All the tools of physical warfare can be understood as attempts to create in the enemy the broken mental state of a slave. The enemy is a human being, not inanimate matter, and uses all possible social and psychological resources... to resist this enslavement of the will and to inflict it in return... The social institution of modern war makes the soldier a captive, but unlike other forms of captivity, the role of his captor is continuously shared by the enemy and the soldier's own army... If a soldier flees the terror of the battle, it makes no difference in which direction he flees. He flees towards death or imprisonment... The front-line is thus a narrow zone of fear and death lying between two prisons.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Millman points out that one of the reasons Canadians supported the war so ardently was that they very little choice in the matter, as every force of censorship that could be brought to bear by the Government was set to work espousing the necessity of war, and "repressing" dissenting voices. As he writes: "By 1917 it would have been rather hard for a Canadian to express any opinion in any way, in any medium, or to be considered to harbour any thought conceivably prejudicial to the government's war policy and not be in danger of prosecution." Brock Millman, *Polarity, Patriotism, and Dissent in Great War Canada, 1914-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 17.

⁷⁷ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 36. Obedience is still a negotiated phenomenon and this fact is perhaps best elucidated by Smith. He takes aim at a concept which underpins much of the historiography of war, namely the "authority-generated model for understanding soldierly behaviour... It is not surprising. The thoughts and deeds expected of soldiers by their commanders at least appear to exert overwhelming dominance over the archival record." As he puts it, the very fact that there were survivors is proof positive that the French army did not strictly adhere to their orders: "orders to attack often included particular objectives to be taken by particular times, *coûte que coûte* (at whatever cost). Since casualties, however high, were always less than 100 percent... we must infer

Knight understood this, and discusses the ultimate power of the military to destroy a human through legally sanctioned torture. Again, we see the veteran Monty imploring his young friend and comrade Clive to return to the military even though the latter had made up his mind to desert. Clive, an example of the self-educated, intelligent, mechanically-inclined son of the English Depression described by Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, cannot see the purpose of continuing to fight for a system that had neglected him and his class so thoroughly and decides not to return to the military. Monty, the experienced one who, like his author, had seen and heard stories of the Great War first hand, knows that desertion is simply not an option. If he did not return, the long arm of military justice would reach him and then he would be sent to the harshest of all possible prisons, the infamous “glasshouse.” The glasshouse was the British Army’s structure of imprisonment, originally a military prison located at Aldershot and constructed with a glazed roof, the army eventually found that it required eight separate locations to deal with the influx of prisoners.⁷⁸ Monty describes a place that would beat the correct attitude into the sufferer, institutionally breaking the soldier’s mind or body (or both) in the process.

that at some point attacks were broken off in defiance at least of the letter, if not ultimately the spirit, of written orders... This book is based on the premise that from the first days of the war, a gray area existed between command expectations and what soldiers in the trenches determined was possible: “Like No Man’s Land itself, that gray area was contested for the duration.” Leonard V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 13-14. This seems to me to be exactly what Knight is saying in the above quoted passage about courage. See also, Ibid., “Remobilizing the Citizen-Soldier through the French Army Mutinies of 1917,” in *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For something of the British example see, Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁷⁸ “Glasshouse,” *Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang*, Ayto, John and John Simpson, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Tim Cook mentions the punishment prisons of the Canadian arguing that “No doubt the wardens and military police wanted to make the prison a far more inhumane place than the trenches, to ensure the compliance of men in the line and the desire of prisoners to get back to their unit, even if it was at the front.” Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008), 251. See also, Tyler, R.A.J., *Bloody Provost: An Account of the Provost Service of the British Army, and the Early Years of the Corps of Royal Military Police* (London: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1980). Clive Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman, Thief: Crime and the British Armed Services since 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16-40. See also G.D. Sheffield, “The Operational Role of British Military Police on the Western Front, 1914-18,” in *British Fighting Methods in the Great War*, ed. Paddy Griffith (New York: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1996), 70-79. The name far outlived the original institution at Aldershot, and Canadians again faced it during the Second World War (when Clive was contemplating

One chap, once, refused to go—he just laid down and wouldn't get up. They put him in a wheelbarrow, and had two sergeants wheeling it and they was ordered that at every ten paces they was to tip him up and smash him back in. And they went down the road to the station like that. He was tough, and he held out till he was unconscious, but they didn't stop even then. They was under orders. Tip him out every ten paces for three miles to the railway station, and if he didn't say he'd walk to slam him back in. And maybe they killed him—but he went, even if all they delivered was a body. So help me Christ, that's true!⁷⁹

Here Knight elucidates the other side of the motivation of men to kill, the fact that men did not have an alternative but to go into the killing zone, and that at that place the killing kind of made sense. The panopticon of the front-line – the hair whitening, blood chilling panopticon that Draycot encountered under the watchful and malicious gaze of the Birdcage – was equally as powerful as that faced by Monty in the Glass House. “You know what they do? Drill you from dawn to dark. And every drill movement is done at the double under full pack. You know why? Because they know no man can ever do it. You go doubling and doubling, until you drop from exhaustion—and then they have you, see?”⁸⁰ Eric Knight is thus answering the gallingly simple question that underlies this work: how and why do men kill? Although he elucidates some of the positive elements of that motivation, pride in self and unit, he also points out the terrible truth of the military's ultimate power. Not just to execute a soldier, but to meticulously and completely break his spirit until he is ready to die at the front if only to escape the torture.

The reality that military justice held the power of life and death was reinforced throughout Adamson's early letters, who wrote to his wife about the positive effect executions had on his troops.⁸¹

desertion). Charles Whiting quotes the warden of a military prison during the Second World War as saying, “Here when a prisoner passes the iron gate he is treated with total contempt for his identity as a man.” Charles Whiting, *Poor Bloody Infantry* (London: Stanley Paul, 1987), 72. See also, Robert Tooley, “Appearance Or Reality? Variations in Infantry Courts Martial: 1st Canadian Division: 1940-1945, Part 2,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (1992): 45. David Englander, “Discipline and Morale in the British Army, 1917-1918,” in *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 127-35.

⁷⁹ Knight, *This Above All*, 277.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ On executions in the British and Canadian Army see, Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman, Thief*, 20-6. See also, Julian Putkowski and Julian Sykes, *Shot at Dawn: Executions in World War One by Authority of the British Army Act* (London: Leo Cooper, 1992). Desmond Morton, “The Supreme Penalty: Canadian Deaths by Firing Squad in the

Instead of embarking to the front with the remainder of the regiment, Captain Adamson was left behind to wait for the first draft of regimental reinforcements, the so-called 500 draft which he was in charge of getting through their tests and getting sent to the front at the CO's orders. He noted the propensity of some of his men to be constantly drunk or otherwise absent, giving the number at between five and ten. In camp,

Military discipline is very severe; men absent or drunk or found out of bounds are tried by Court Martial and several men have been shot for straying away from the camp. One was shot this morning. If another is to be shot while I am here I will get permission to take my men to the spot as I think it would be the only thing that would impress upon them the seriousness of the whole affair and the meaning of discipline. I suggested to the Commandant having a Court Martial on one of my men and shooting him. He said he would not like to be responsible for the execution of a Canadian, but will put him in irons and go as far as possible... Every man I have spoken to at the front is eager to get back and help their respective regiment to play the game, thoroughly realizing the game and what it means. The British Tommy is the finest thing in the world in his own way.⁸²

In the letter, Adamson also details three of the "old men" doing twenty-eight days' hard labour in the military prison. Men killed, ultimately, because they have no choice but to be placed in situations where killing was necessary. They were *compelled* relentlessly into killing situations by the reality of the harshest of prisons, and they were *impelled* into them (in other words, they found ways to want to be there) through the love of regiment, comrades, and family (usually women) behind the lines.⁸³

First World War," *Queen's Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (Autumn 1972): 345-352. Anthony Babington, *For the Sake of Example: Capital Courts-Martial 1914-1920* (London: Leo Cooper, 1983).

⁸² Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 20-21.

⁸³ Leed argues that a large component of the comradeship of the front was a "collective estrangement from the military role [that] gave the frontsoldier a sense of having a collective, 'clandestine' self, which could not be made visible to those 'outside' the war. They would not recognize it or understand it." Furthermore, and bleakly enough, he also argues that the soldier, "In defending himself against the definition of himself as an aggressive, offensive agent of a national will... was forced to internalize a decidedly diminished sense of his status as an anonymous worker in a bleak and threatening world. If trench warfare was nothing other than a set of compromises that assumed a physical, material form, the personality of the frontsoldier was woven of an even more impacted set of compromises between official motives proper to soldiers in battle and 'unofficial' motives proper to men seeking to continue their lives." Leed, *No Man's Land*, 111-113. Vance argues that the pride of comradeship transcended rank and was the only thing linking the wars of the divisional commander and the private soldier: "The private in the ranks did not experience the same war as his divisional commander, so the two could not possibly construct the same memory. Nevertheless, both versions were built on the same assumption: that the war possessed certain positive features which offered some compensation for its horrors. The most important of these was the

As Knight points out, the decision to fight or flee was largely up to the individual during battle, although – of course – there was often no safe place to flee: thus, it is not surprising that those soldiers who could legitimize their absence from the narrow zone of fear and death often availed themselves of the opportunity.⁸⁴ McLaren did with the Comedy Company (and later the Dumbells), although he was resigned to the fact that he would likely have to return to the front, his fate hanging on the capricious whim of the Commanding Officer of the battalion. Papineau, after writing his treatise, did it with Beaverbrook and was taken on the staff of the Canadian Corps, although he eventually returned to the regiment to assuage his conscious and regain his self-image as a warrior. Christie and Draycot were both invalided due to their mind's incapacity to further bear the strains of war, although both returned to the front by choice in interesting ways. Many were given the opportunity to escape the "narrow zone of death" and many took that opportunity, although some chose to return of their own volition. Even Victor Gianelli, who was never wounded badly enough to leave the line in fifteen months of service, bemoaned the fact that he had not received "a jake blighty" when a spent round hit him in the thigh.⁸⁵

What was true for fighting and running away as Monty puts it was also true of killing, especially of prisoners of war. This aspect of killing varied widely depending on the situation. Many raids went in

comradeship of soldiers. The notion of comradeship was central to the veterans' memory of the war, and the deep and enduring bond between ex-soldiers was the dominant element of veteran culture in the 1920s and 1930s." Jonathan F. Vance, "The Soldier as Novelist: Literature, History, and the Great War," *Canadian Literature* no. 179 (2003): 23.

⁸⁴ The artist A.Y. Jackson provides an excellent example of this. As discussed by Scotland: "The fighting left A.Y. Jackson disillusioned. With little desire to return to the front, he wrote his cousin, Florence Clement, telling her that he had lost all 'illusions' about war. 'I don't care how long I take to get ready for the trenches,' he confessed. He would do as ordered 'but not much more.' In Jackson's mind, the war had become mass slaughter. There was no place for individual distinction. 'Glory and decorations are not for the private soldiers,' he wrote. He commented to Florence that individual men were less important than 'a box of jam.' Ironically, the average soldier only stood out when he resisted. A 'private is nothing, unless he disobeys orders.' Then a 'big fuss' ensues and he 'gets shot.'" Jonathan Scotland, "And the Men Returned: Canadian Veterans and the Aftermath of the Great War," PhD Dissertation, the University of Western Ontario, 2015, 5.

⁸⁵ Gianelli to family, 28 Apr 1918, 2, 31(18.1-18.16)-5, TMM. Morton writes about the nearly universal desire for a blighty in, Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1997), 181-206. See also, Brian Bond, *Survivors of a Kind: Memoirs of the Western Front* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 30, 81.

with strict orders not to take prisoners, for example, but in open offensive battle the situation was often much different. Cook argues that men navigated a “politics of surrender,” and that:

Nothing is as cut and dried as the evidence suggests: the chaos of battle is distilled into a letter or a diary entry, and then distilled again by the historian. But all of these experiences go back to the harsh world of mad, scrambling battles, swirling confusion, with the overpowering smell of freshly spilt blood, soldiers deafened from explosions, hearts pounding with adrenaline and fear... During the Great War, it was kill or be killed in battle, and all soldiers recognised that fact.⁸⁶

The soldiers here studied had many and/or varied relationships with their German human counterparts, and they reacted to their presence in ways as different as Lynch’s Company Sergeant Major (CSM) kicking a dishonest prisoner’s skull in with his hobnailed boots at the Battle of Jigsaw Wood (see below page 271) to the reaction of J.E. Brice to another German during the same battle.

I was carrying panniers for Lewis Guns, with loop panniers on a strap, one on my chest, and one on my back, when I ducked for shell-hole [the] pannier at back would hit me on head, knock my hat over my face, ducked to one shell-hole, got started out, pushed hat off of face, and there was a German, other side, he had no rifle, I just said: ‘Well Gerry, there is only room for one here, so get out.’ He did quick, too.⁸⁷

The image he presents is a modification of Bairnsfather’s famous dictum to find “another ‘ole,” and it is possible that the image of the cartoon actually played a role in the line spoken by a bewildered soldier in a shell-hole fifty years before Brice wrote of it in the present tense.

Varying types of memoir (or witness statements) will be my primary source in attempting to ascertain how men *remembered* fighting and killing.⁸⁸ To be precise, two “memoirs” in the strict sense of

⁸⁶ Tim Cook, “The Politics of Surrender: Canadian Soldiers and the Killing of Prisoners in the Great War,” *The Journal of Military History*, 70, no. 3 (2006): 640. See also, Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁸⁷ J.E. Brice, “Memories of the 500 Draft [Bastedo’s title],” letter, 18th May 1964, 31(7)-2.

⁸⁸ In their analysis of the writings of criminal murderers, Arntfield and Danesi find that, in their writings there tend to be four narrative typologies, “the Hero, Professional, Revenger, and Tragedian.” Although these archetypes apply, to a certain extent, to writings of the soldiers here studied, the motivation of an extra-legal mass-murderer and a legal mass-murderer (a soldier at war) are fundamentally opposed. Whereas the mass-murderer, by definition, cannot openly boast of his crimes, the soldier is encouraged to discuss the “realities at the front.” The authors nevertheless draw a parallel between the writings of soldiers at the front and the writings of mass murderers. They quote the linguist John Olson who describes a mass-murderer’s perception of being, “in a war situation, holed up in a bunker completely alone, unable to communicate their situation except through [the]

the term, one published and one unpublished (Munroe and Draycot respectively), one outline vision of what trench fighting was and how to win at the killing (Papineau), one set of notes composed as an NCO keeping accounts of his 34 men and instructing them in their purpose as snipers (Christie), one collected remembrance by the official “spokesperson” of the Comedy Company (McLaren), and one set of letters from a lance-corporal at the front (Gianelli) will be contextualized against the testimony of other members of the regiment. Each is inevitably meditated and not immediately composed; a certain amount of distance from the actual job of pulling one’s trigger is necessary if only to hold a pen and paper. Talbot Papineau’s treatise on trench fighting, a document that appears unknown to the historiography surrounding its author, illustrates the concerns and priorities of the front-line officer in getting his men to fight as effectively as possible.⁸⁹ Jack Munroe’s *Mopping Up* will be analyzed in an

note.” Michael Arntfield and Marcel Danesi, *Murder in Plain English: From Manifestos to Memes – Looking at Murder through the Words of Killers* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2017), kindle loc. 2200-2201. Another useful work on how soldiers of the German *Freikorps* fantasized about and understood killing, the military and women in terms of one another is Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies: Volume 1 Women Floods Bodies History*, trans. Stephen Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). For an analysis of the difficult and much nuanced difference between killing in war and murder see McMahon who argues that: “The prevailing view is that in a state of war, the practice of killing is governed by different moral principles from those that govern acts of killing in other contexts... political leaders can somehow cause other people’s moral rights to disappear simply by commanding their armies to attack them.” Jeff McMahon, *Killing in War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), i.

⁸⁹ Brewster quotes only his purported last words, “you know Hughie, this is suicide,” originally quoted in Gwyn’s work. Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1992), 399. Hugh Brewster, *From Vimy to Victory: Canada’s Fight to the Finish of World War I* (Toronto: Scholastic Canada Ltd, 2014), 22. Niven remembered Papineau’s famous last words late in life, and they do not appear in his discussion of Papineau in any of the lengthy correspondence here studied. Adamson, moreover, consistently spoke of Niven as someone whose tales were not to be believed, and given to inflation (and that was during the war). Many have written about his national vision as it related to the war, and his famous exchange of letters with Henri Bourassa. See for example, Wesley C. Gustavson, “Competing Visions: Canada, Britain, and the Writing of the First World War,” in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, ed., Douglas Francis and Phillip Buckner (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 141-143. The fundamentally conflicted nature of Papineau’s abhorrence of war and passionately patriotic national propaganda is brought out by Keelen. Papineau who could decry the very nature of the war, (“there should be no heroism in war. No glorification—no reward. For us it should be the simple execution of an abhorrent duty—a thing almost to be ashamed of”), “would begin to mould the reputation of Canadians [sic] soldiers as he decided that the war was worthwhile because it was vital to the creation of the Canadian Nation.” Geoff Keelan, “The Forgotten Few: Quebec and the Memory of the First World War,” in *The Great War: From Memory to History*, eds., Jonathan F. Vance, Kellen Kurshinski, Matt Symes, Steve Marti, and Alicia Robinet (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 247-250. Cook mentions Papineau on numerous occasions but restricts himself to his correspondence and does not mention the treatise. Cook, *Shock*

endeavour to separate hyperbole from fact in killing narrative.⁹⁰ Jim Christie's diary presents a useful counterfoil to Munroe's bombast; short and to the point, the lecture notes he outlined in the notebook give useful insight into what it was to take life as a specialist. Walter Draycot's experiences as "fate's plaything" also serve to demonstrate just how much agency a soldier had in their employment and their decision to take life. The final two accounts will be those of Jack McLaren, a member of the PPCLI Comedy Company, and Victor Gianelli. In both of these the authors intentionally distance themselves from the killing they committed and fail to address it openly. Nevertheless, in their accounts we can find significant similarities with those who were more forthright about killing the enemy, and we can begin to understand how men can kill and choose not to discuss it. The historiography of killing fails to take into account those who do not chose to speak of their agency as killers, and the parallels between what McLaren and Gianelli wrote about their front-line service while remaining silent on the subject, and those who did speak to their role as killers, is important to understanding what men left between the lines of their correspondence and remembrance.

Troops, 349-350. Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917-1918* (Toronto: Vikings, 2008), 485.

⁹⁰ Modern literary scholars would likely read Munroe's text as "auto-fiction." But they are quick to point out, this does not mean that works of auto-fiction are entirely fictional accounts, as they tend to mirror what happened in real life at least in spirit, if not in letter. Di Summa-Knoop notes that memoir cannot be pinned down to genre, and that its "prismatic" nature raises important questions about truth, "What is, to wit, phenomenal about memoir is how prismatic it is, how prone to morphing, to play, crisscross, and perhaps even violate the boundaries and definitions that philosophy and literary criticism have, throughout the centuries, attached to different genres—in fiction and nonfiction alike." She quotes the author of a self-confessedly autofiction memoir as characterizing the genre as a "pact" with the audience, a truly important element in Munroe's writing: "the author of autofiction tends to be both the narrator and the central character in his or her story, uses his or her real name, describes daily life often inventing or modifying certain facts, and does so in search not only for truth and justice but also for self." Writing about the evolution of memoir modes, Di Summa-Knoop argues that they grew out of a tradition of "confession," namely that of St. Augustine, but have become increasingly confused as to the necessity and nature of objective truth: "The authors mentioned are divided between the tradition of confession and the postmodern dismantling of authenticity that followed." Laura Di Summa-Knoop, "Critical Autobiography: A New Genre," *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 9 (2017), 1, 11, 5-6. See also, James Olney, *Memory & Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). W.K. Zinsser, *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir* (New York: Mariner Books, 1998). It might be pointed out that said postmodern dismantling took place within the ironic rubric that emerged from the Great War. Fussell, for example does. See, Fussell, *The Great War in Modern Memory*, 18-27.

Many soldiers described their experiences of war using the metaphor of the show or the movie reel, simultaneously contributing to and consuming the portrayal of soldiers on the stage and screen. For example, when issued a steel helmet for the first time, Gianelli remarked that they were “the same worn by soldiers you see in the movies.”⁹¹ The stage is a useful lens through which to look at killing in war. In both cases, we are dealing with a conscious construction in the aftermath of battle, and a theatrical, stage-managed presentation during it. The fact that what it meant to be an infantry soldier was to volunteer to kill the enemy is an often unstated but ever-present fact. An example of the other type of workmanlike, cold-blooded killing is provided by an anonymous soldier sharing a CPR railcar with a Private Warren of the PPCLI. He “had been of the ‘little black devils’ [8th Battalion Winnipeg Rifles] whose exploits at Ypres had been confirmation of the christening to the title.”⁹² The two soldiers, finding themselves confined within each other’s company, began to tell a little of their experiences, granting “a glimpse of the war” to the interlocuting reporter. The soldier of the 8th Battalion narrates his experiences in a way that is similar to many of the battle narratives that involve taking life. He adopts the third person and skips between disconnected fragments of present-tense statements.

Among these pictures I see myself doing listening post duty. I see myself as I know I looked – caked in mud... I see still another picture which might be called ‘the falling tree.’ A German officer, a staff officer, evidently, is directing some operations – tunnelling maybe, about 50 feet behind their line. I have had glimpses of him half a dozen times and now I get a good line on him. In this picture I see myself waiting for what seems a long time. Then suddenly his head and shoulders sway, and he falls straight forward like a chopped tree. Consider a reel of such pictures passing before me continuously, between Quebec and Victoria, to which place I am ordered for another three months to a convalescent home, and you will have some idea of what I think of this warfare today.⁹³

⁹¹ Victor Gianelli to family, May 30 1917, 31(18.1)-5.

⁹² “Glimpse of the War,” *Calgary Herald*, 16 Nov 1915, 7.

⁹³ Ibid. There was no Cary in the 8th Battalion. It is possible that he gave the reporter a fake name, or that it was misspelled. His description seems to fit with the what Thelweit noted in his study of *Freikorps* “soldier male” memoirs, namely the tendency to narrate oneself out of the situation, “It is as if he were not really there when he murders, as if he were overcome by a sudden *absence*.” Thelweit, *Male Fantasies*, 202.

The anonymous soldier was suffering from flashbacks to the event and was evidently psychologically disturbed by his experiences. Although identifying himself as a killer, he is careful to position himself in the role of observer, seeing the man fall “like a chopped tree” and downplaying his agency in causing him to fall. Alfred Edward Warren, an original Patricia with the regimental number 224, also told something of his story. The wounded Private Warren began by stating that the battle in which he was wounded, St. Eloi, was not a “really big battle,” presumably referring to the likes of 2nd Ypres and the ensuing bloodletting of the Patricia’s at Frezenburg. Unlike that battle, the failed attempt to retake “the mound” at St. Eloi had seen “only” twenty-seven casualties amongst the Patricia’s. Nevertheless, the fighting had been intense due to the proximity of the trenches, which were “not more than 20 to 30 yards apart.”⁹⁴ For two days, the opposing sides fought over this little corner of hell, “charging and counter-charging” in the confined space: “We took a trench, lost it, took it, lost it. The battle swayed backward and forward over a battle field of at most not more than 350 yards. Two days this space locked together in hell, bayonets out, shrapnel flying, shells bursting, machine guns firing, bombs exploding. *You just cannot imagine that picture any more than I can properly describe it.* [Emphasis added]”⁹⁵ Warren, having seen the face of war, finds himself incapable of describing it adequately, despite his earnest efforts to do so, to the party ensconced in the comfort and solitude of a CPR car making its methodical and rhythmic way across the country. Luckily, in this case, the *Herald’s* reporter likely was able to fill in any gaps in Warren’s testimony.

Euphemistic language was a narrative and linguistic device that soldiers used to describe the murderous violence that they enacted upon the enemy and vice versa. Walter Draycot refers to a Stokes Mortar barrage of 666 rounds (the devil’s number) as a device to “keep the enemy entertained.” In his letters home, Victor Gianelli consistently refers to “paying” and “returning compliments” to the

⁹⁴ “Glimpse of the War,” *Calgary Herald*.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Germans. Artillery barrages were meant to “soften up” the enemy, and the war itself became a “job” or a “game” to its participants. The greatest euphemism of them all was the word most commonly used for battle which, almost invariably, was “show.”⁹⁶

Many found war a difficult thing to speak about, and this was true before, during and after the First World War. John Hubbard – a veteran of the Boer War who left his job as a butler to join the newly forming Princess Patricia’s one week after the news that Canada was at war reached Canada – was seen as a “modest man” by the Toronto *Star* reporter who interviewed him. Despite wearing the “King’s and Queen’s Medals and six clasps” for his part in the conflict against the white Afrikaners of the Veldt, he “absolutely refused to talk about his experiences.”⁹⁷ Perhaps Hubbard’s mind was too focused on the upcoming conflict with the Germans to dwell publicly upon his past experiences. Or, perhaps he did not feel comfortable speaking about the truths of what was a terrible conflict. It would have been difficult for a man with experience of such a time and place to speak to a reporter about what he knew of the Boer War in a way that would coalesce with the typical presentation of it to contemporary Canadians, a characterization that tended to be hyper-patriotic and bear little resemblance to reality. As Berger writes of the journalistic accounts of the Boer war, “depictions of casualties and carnage suffered from reticence and a lack of realism ... their understanding of what was required [in war] bore a closer resemblance to the deeds chronicled by Sir Walter Scott than the realities to come.”⁹⁸ Hubbard may have had any number of reasons for remaining mute about his experiences, and it may not have seemed quite contextually appropriate in the festive and excitable air of Ottawa in August 1914 to bring up

⁹⁶ See for example, Tim Cook, “Fighting Words: Canadian Soldiers’ Slang and Swearing in the Great War,” *War in History* 20, no. 3 (2013): 332-333. On soldiers’ language during the war more generally see, John Brophy and Eric Partridge, *The Long Trail: What the British Soldier Sang and Said in the Great War of 1914-18* (London: A. Deutsch, 1965). Martin Pegler, *Soldiers’ Songs and Slang of the Great War* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2014).

⁹⁷ “92 more ‘Princess Pat’s’ have gone to Ottawa for their equipment,” *The Toronto Daily Star*, 15 August 1914, 1.

⁹⁸ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power – Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 236. See also, Carmen Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal & Kingston: Canadian War Museum & McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 20-30.

difficult truths to an earnest reporter.⁹⁹ The role of the soldier, and incidentally the butler, is not to speak but to act.

Although the war was in deadly earnest, the men of the Canadian Expeditionary Force made efforts to reduce its seriousness with comedy and laughter. As Jack McLaren wrote, “No nation goes to war other than seriously: neither have we. But, after our manner, we have hidden our seriousness in laughter and song.” To McLaren, the whole war was an opportunity for a good joke: “It is evident from the great numbers who attended that this pastime was regarded as good entertainment; in fact some genius went so far as to call France and Flanders ‘Theatres of War.’”¹⁰⁰ At the front, much of the jollity was subsumed in the realities of danger and death around them. The famous wartime cartoonist Bruce Bairnsfather’s editor sums up the attitude of the average British soldier, and the spirit of Bairnsfather’s commentary on the war as: “‘J’y suis,’ he might exclaim, if he spoke French, ‘*et il m’embête que j’y suis. Je voudrais que je n’y suis pas. fais j’y suis, et, mes bons camarades, par tous les dieux, j’y reste!*’”¹⁰¹ The emphasis, of course, is on his good friends, his comrades. They will “stick” with him. Over and again we will see this theme in the writings of veterans, that they were motivated by love of all kinds, but chiefly by love for their comrades, and that the chief skill that warfare on the Western Front called for was the ability to endure and “stick.”

⁹⁹ See for example, Robert Rutherford, “Canada’s August Festival: Communitas, Liminality, and Social Memory,” *Canadian Historical Review* 77, no. 2 (June 1996), 221-249. On the European example see, John Horne, ed., *State, Society, and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁰⁰ JW McLaren, “Mirth and Mud I: The Chronicle of the First Organized Canadian Concert Party Tour of the Trenches during the Great War,” *MacLean’s Magazine*, January 1, 1929, 14.

¹⁰¹ Editor of “The Bystander,” “Foreword,” in, Bruce Bairnsfather, *Fragments from France* (London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1917), 11. *Archive.org* <https://archive.org/details/fragmentsfromfra00bairuoft> (22 Aug 2017). Cultural historians have long noted the importance of humour to courage and sanity at the front. On humour in the trenches see for example, Edward Madigan, “‘Sticking to a Hateful Task’: Resilience, Humour, and British Understandings of Combatant Courage, 1914–1918,” *War in History* 20, no. 1 (2013): 76-98. Tim Cook “‘I will meet the world with a smile and a joke’ Canadian Soldiers’ Humour in the Great War,” *Canadian Military History* 22, no. 2 (2015), 57-58 J. G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 144-148. Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 242-3. Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 90-2. Psychologists and biologists have also studied the beneficial effects of laughing. Labott, Susan M. and Randall B. Martin, “The Stress-Moderating Effects of Weeping and Humour,” *Journal of Human Stress*, 13, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 159-164.

The ways in which soldiers censored their accounts tended to change depending on when they were writing and the audience they were addressing. Soldiers tended to print their experiences in overtly polarized ways during the conflict itself, and constantly sought to justify their job's killing necessity. Supporting the fighting man in the life-or-death struggle in which he was engaged was seen to be of paramount importance. Underlying this support for the soldiers at the front was a very real fear of the violence being done to friends and comrades, sons and brothers, acquaintances and friends at the front. Thus, the memoirs and experiences of soldiers in print tended to paint the Germans in the vilest possible terms. Munroe has it that one Patricia, describing the first time he had "winged" a German, "fiercely" longed for the opportunity to see "one of those faces, the faces I had in my mind, shaped like a pig's, with wide round chops and a low brutal forehead."¹⁰² Published during the war, Munroe's account must be seen as representative of the vitriolic language that tended to pervade any account of the enemy. During the interwar years, these descriptions tended to soften and become more nuanced; as Bourke and others have pointed out, they often reversed polarity entirely and men began to portray the slaughter as a crime and the Germans as fellow sufferers and victims of a system that oppressed them.¹⁰³ The Second World War and its immediate aftermath saw a further revision of the context surrounding war memoir; during it, the memories of First World War soldiers became pedagogical and motivational – the interwar trend towards decrying the uselessness and pointlessness of the war was difficult to maintain while the rematch was being fought, and later when its implications were felt.

Many men remembered those under whom they served as good, clean, upstanding, and kind men. Often officers or NCOs are remembered especially for the standard that they set for the men

¹⁰² Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 114.

¹⁰³ Bourke, *Intimate History of Killing*, 220-25. See also, Vance, "The Soldier as Novelist," 24-27.

under their command.¹⁰⁴ One of many examples is given by Bryce, describing the Battle of Jigsaw Wood and the steadying effect that a good officer had upon his men: “In this advance, Captain Broeke was on my right, and I was watching him for orders. He was a great officer. They were all and every one great officers in the Pats, I don’t know any who were not so.”¹⁰⁵ Some officers and men comported themselves in such a way that they were forever after remembered as portraits of forthright leaders and men. Often these men died (although Captain, later Lieutenant-Colonel Melville Rysdale Ten Broeke survived the war and later commanded the regiment), and often too the immediacy of their death served as the impetus for revenge and, after the war, the impetus to pen hagiographical accounts – as the men who survived looked back bewildered and broken on the many who had been lost.

The PPCLI, whose initial establishment was privately funded and whose lineage was patronized by royalty, was a collection of men who were given the task of fighting, as best they could, through four years of war. The inculcation of the fighting spirit was all important: “there is nothing in the world they looked forward to more than a good knock down drag out fight.”¹⁰⁶ Of 249 officers who served with the regiment in the field fully 228 were casualties in one capacity or another, and fifty of these returned to the front after being wounded. This included the founder of the regiment, Hamilton Gault, who was grievously wounded on two occasions, losing a leg at Sanctuary Wood. Of the 4857 “W[arrant] O[fficers] N.C.O.’s and Men” 3848 became casualties, again with some 500 returning to the ranks after being wounded.¹⁰⁷ Counting these men only once, that meant that 82% of the men who served with the regiment became casualties at some point, although any individual who joined the regiment during the

¹⁰⁴ On the relationship between officers and men during the First World War and its paternalistic elements see, Gary Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (New York: Macmillan Press, 2000), 165-178.

¹⁰⁵ J.E. Bryce to W.E. Bastedo, 18th May 1964, 11, 31(7)-2. Bryce also spells his name with an “i.”

¹⁰⁶ “Canada’s Fighting Devils: The Fabulous Princess Pats,” *Man’s Conquest Magazine*, (undated), 16(3)-1.

¹⁰⁷ “500 of other ranks appear in the casualty lists more than once, many of them three, and some four, five and even six times.” Hodder -Williams, *Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry*, 2 vols. (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1923), 2:62.

war did still have a 75% chance of surviving it. All the men here studied, except Jack McLaren, became casualties at one point or another in their service, Papineau being killed at Passchendaele, Munroe, Christie and Draycot eventually being invalided to Canada, and Gianelli wounded (slightly) in September 1918, and choosing to remain with the regiment. In total 5086 men served at the front with the regiment, 229 Officers and 4857 men. Of these 1237 men were killed, and 2611 wounded. Three thousand six hundred and ninety-nine men who served with the regiment in the field survived the war.

In forming the Patricia's, Hamilton Gault and the regiment's first Colonel (the Governor-General's Military secretary Francis Farquhar) gave preference to former soldiers who had settled in Canada after they had completed their service in the British Army.¹⁰⁸ Forty-one per cent of the strength of the Patricia's or 456 men had some form of "War Service" and 95% claimed some former service (Jack Munroe, for example, claimed – falsely – that he had served with the "First Montana, US Army"¹⁰⁹). On parade could be seen no less than 771 medals and decorations, dispersed unevenly amongst the serried ranks of the newly founded regiment.¹¹⁰ Thus Patricia's regiment was one with a vast amount of experience with the wars of colonialism that had marked the British Army's service throughout the world. Nevertheless, Munroe finds that the men of the regiment were mostly alike in their kind and roughly-gentle character: "The admiring tone, and the voice of kindness, sounded natural. They were what I was used to. I looked deep into [a Patricia's] face. His eyes were nice, too ... These strange beings

¹⁰⁸ On the foundation of the regiment and Hamilton Gault see, "La Grand Guerre pour Gault," unpublished manuscript, 1964, 38(14)-2. The author calls Gault "a dear 'Cadet' of [Kipling's] Kim."

¹⁰⁹ No such regiment existed, and Munroe – according to Farmiloe – spent almost no time in Montana. Farmiloe, *The Legend of Jack Munroe*, 15-49. The fiction was designed to ensure that Munroe was accepted into the regiment of veterans Gault and Farquhar were forming. Holt found that, in some units, less than half of all claims of former service were true. Holt, "Filling the Ranks," 1:292-3.

¹¹⁰ One man, Charles Wake, was wounded by a spear while marching with Kitchener to Gordon's relief at Khartoum in 1884. Allegedly, Queen Victoria pinned his Distinguished Conduct Medal herself after he won it at the Battle of 'El Teb. "48-year-old Spear Wound Interests Doctors," Newspaper Clipping, circa 1938, 31(1)-13.

called soldiers were my friends as truly as the men I had known in the peace world!”¹¹¹ The brotherhood of soldiers tends to be founded on love for one another, and this love is ranged in opposition to the enemy.

The regiment, then, was hundreds of men working together, trapped in the hell-prison of war, laughing and singing together because they somehow kept wanting to be there, and doing their best to make their lives as endurable as possible while making that of the enemy as difficult as possible. The Patricia’s thus form a useful group of men to focus on, as they were so conspicuous in their ability to “stick it” during battles and trench-fighting that extended over four long years. One of the keys to the longevity of their legend was the fact that the Patricia’s were founded as a national, imperial regiment that was “a battalion apart”¹¹² in the words of Hugh Niven, and whose “place of origin was all over the world”¹¹³ and thus was “claimed by cities all over the country.”¹¹⁴ This meant that their name could fire the blood of the uninitiated, and command the respect of both friends and enemies.¹¹⁵ The regiment, which was founded with chivalric flare and presented as a gift to King George V, tended to encapsulate the dual aspect of the war as it was (and is) presented; both as horrible, murderous drudgery, and an exciting adventure filled with lovable characters. Of course, the regiment had its fair share of disreputable characters, Falstaffian archetypes (especially Charlie Stewart¹¹⁶), and blundering murderers who wasted their men’s lives (usually inexperienced officers losing their cool or failing to listen to advice

¹¹¹ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 38. On the love of animals for soldiers see, Tim Cook and Andrew Iarocci, “Animal Soldiers: Whether they were Mascots, Beasts of Burden, or Pets, Animals brought Solace to the First World War Soldiers Serving at the Front,” *Canada’s History* (October-November 2013): 20-27.

¹¹² Hugh Niven to E.W.K. MacGregor, 5 Mar 1964, 31(53.2)-9.

¹¹³ “Canada’s Fighting Devils,” undated magazine clipping, 18, 16(3)-1.

¹¹⁴ R.B. Farrell, “Weekly Between Ourselves Series, ‘The Princess Patricias,’” *CBC National Network Radio Broadcast*, 24 Nov 1940, 16(1.5)-1.

¹¹⁵ For example, Will Bird relates a story about a German patrol sneaking up on a listening post that indicates how famous the name of the regiment was even amongst the enemy: “A party of [prowling Germans] came down a sap towards the post Earle was on and called out in English, ‘Are you the Pats?’ One of the new men shouted back ‘no we’re the ‘forty-twas,’” before Earle could stop him.” Will R. Bird, *And We Go On: A Memoir of the Great War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, (1930) 2014), 165.

¹¹⁶ Ian McCulloch, “Crisis in Leadership: The Seventh Brigade and the Nivelles ‘Mutiny,’ 1918,” in *The Apathetic and the Defiant*, ed., Craig Leslie Mantle (Kingston, Ont: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 386-389.

about the tactical situation which the men tended to understand better than their officers).¹¹⁷ The latter, blundering murderer (of his own troops) type, although discussed in the memoirs here studied, tended to be ignored in the official history. Nevertheless, men always had (and usually pointed to) at least one officer or NCO that they looked up to as an archetype of regimental professionalism, and the nuanced character that that entailed.

Vice-regal patronage attended the formation of the regiment and provided it with its most enduring symbols, but the men's sound and thorough understanding of military musketry was the key consideration of officers as they prepared to depart first for England, and then for France. The Patricia's ran through the complete musketry school test shoot, and every batch of reinforcements was to have completed at least one formal range.¹¹⁸ For the men of the newly formed Pat's, training at arms, drilling, marching and shooting were daily occurrences leading up to their arrival in France. Christie, for example, makes emphatic that rifles were to be test fired on every possible occasion, and especially before going into the trenches.¹¹⁹ J.J. Burke records in a brief diary his scores and the pride that he felt in them, during the range which he fired just prior to going overseas with the 500 draft (the first PPCLI

¹¹⁷ See for example, Eric Micheltore, "My First Trip to the Trenches," undated, 31(24)-9. Sgt. David "Jock" Stirling (624), "Correspondence," 31(23)-12. A.R. Jones recalls the example of John Spendlove (A10936) "who could hardly see but he managed to memorize the eye chart and got away with it for a while. After the 2nd of June show [Sanctuary Wood] John was boarded out. He had been furiously throwing bombs at friend and foe alike." A.R. Jones to W.E. Bastedo, 30 Mar 1964, 31(27)-7. The end of the war may prove one exception to this rule, where many officers took leave immediately after the resumption of Draconian pre-war discipline and mores which the men who had won the war understandably chafed under. Moreover, casualties, especially amongst Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and officers, were extremely high and the new drafts of men who had recently refilled the ranks after the terrible fighting of the Hundred Days hardly knew each other. See, McCulloch, "Crisis in Leadership," 395-99. The declining number of trained and experienced junior leaders during the latter portion of the war is well charted by Griffith, *Battle Tactics*, 44-9.

¹¹⁸ "Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry: War Diaries 1914-1919," transcr., Michael Thierens, 2-3. *Archive.org* <https://archive.org/details/PrincessPatriciasCanadianLightInfantryppcliWarDiary1915-1919> (1 Aug 2017). In the infantry, successful firing of Parts I-IV of this range is what separated recruits from trained soldiers. General Staff, *Musketry Regulations Part II Rifle Ranges and Musketry Appliances* (London: HM Stationary Office, 1910), 2. See also Holt, "Filling the Ranks," 1:295-297, 367, 380.

¹¹⁹ "Test rifle at every opportunity... Snapping practice to be practiced as much as possible." Christie, "Ruby Diary, 10 Feb 16, 31(28)-2.

reinforcements). He notes, for example, that during the “Mad minute” he fired only ten rounds (out of fifteen) but still scored a thirteen (meaning he scored with a good grouping on every round).¹²⁰

The musketry regulations provide an interesting insight into how men were taught to shoot when they knew they were going to war. The schedule for Table B of the musketry course, which the Patricia’s shot at Winchester, was designed for trained soldiers and includes twenty-five practices in different positions, either kneeling or lying, supported and unsupported; ranges, from 100 to 600 yards; either slow or rapid; and at three types of targets, bullseye (primarily) or one of two types of silhouette. The eleventh practice, for example, takes place at 300 yards, “Lying. Rifle unloaded and magazine empty until the target appears. Loading from the pouch or bandolier by five rounds afterwards. One minute allowed.”¹²¹ The silhouette targets are something that are often overlooked in the historiography, which tends to present men as shooting at bullseye targets alone during this period.¹²² Their shape says much about how men were trained in firing their rifles to kill an enemy. Although the bullseye (2nd Class Elementary Target) was a feature of grouping applications of musketry, most of the advanced applications were fired at painted or papered figures designed to look like the head and shoulders of a man.

An aged former sergeant who joined the Patricia’s through the 1st University Company and stayed on strength for much of the war reflected with pride on his skill at arms years after the fact. He sent a weathered and yellowed certificate from the BEF First Army Musketry Camp course for Warrant and Non-Commissioned Officers where he received top marks: “A smart N.C.O. Interested, and

¹²⁰ He adds as an addendum that “During the militia years 1920-1939 won the ‘Best Tyro medal at Heal’s Range, Victoria.” J.J. Burke, “Copy of Diary,” 1 Feb 1915, 31(17)-2.

¹²¹ General Staff, *Musketry Regulations Part I* (London: HM Stationary Office, 1909 (amended 1914)), 254.

¹²² David Grossman, “Teaching Kids to Kill,” *National Forum: Journal of the Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society*, Fall, 2000. <https://www.killology.com/teaching-kids-to-kill> (31 July 2017). See also, Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Black Bay Books, 1996), 253-5. Grossman has written much on the subject including, Dave Grossman, *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and in Peace* (New York: Warrior Science Publications, 2003), 402.

thoroughly capable... His work during the Course has been: – Very Good.”¹²³ Completing the course on June 16th, 1918, Bradford kept it for nearly fifty years before sending it to Captain Cole of the Regimental Association in 1966. These were men who believed themselves and their regiment to be a cut above the rest, and valued their personal contributions: “According to Major Drummond Hay then 4 Co. Company Commander, this was the best certificate ever brought back to the regiment up to that date. I treasure this one.”¹²⁴ In Bradford’s case, he was proud that the militiaman student (after three years of war) could prove himself equal to or better than the best of the British Army at the job of instructing men to shoot.

Marching, drilling and shooting were the staples of PPCLI training. Only a tiny proportion of the 120 Rounds of small arms ammunition carried with the infantry soldier would actually depart well aimed rifles directed at other human beings, but the goal of musketry training was to maximize that percentage, to teach men to take and obey fire control orders, and to inculcate trust and familiarity between the man and his weapon. During a thorough musketry course, soldiers learned the exact chemical composition of the bullets that they would be firing: “Bullet, Compound, consisting of a core containing 98 per cent lead and 2 per cent. Antimony Copper and 20 per cent. Nickel.”¹²⁵ The bullet sat in a brass cartridge atop a charge of 31 grains of cordite “in 60 small strands.”¹²⁶ That charge propelling that ball was their *raison d’être*, but they would find that, in carrying these 7200 small strands of cordite and the rifle that exploded them, they were also required to carry a lot of other things besides.¹²⁷ The

¹²³ W.C.R. Bradford to W.E. Bastedo, undated, 31(2)-3.

¹²⁴ Ibid., “First Army Musketry Camp Report on A/10942 Srgt. Bradford.”

¹²⁵ General Staff, *Musketry Regulations Part I*, 50.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Of course, although the rifle was the principal infantry armament on the Western Front, the bomb, machine gun, and bayonet were also part of his *raison d’être*. Perhaps it may be correct to say that firepower generally and the rifle specifically were the infantryman’s purpose, or reason for existing. Great tactical debates were waged on which arm should be used and when, always with the goal of maximizing killing efficiency. See for example, Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*, 104-9. See also, Ibid., “The Extent of Tactical Reform in the British Army,” in *British Fighting Methods in the Great War*, ed., Paddy Griffith (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1996), 1-23. Bidwell and Graham, *Fire-Power*, 116-30. Griffith points out that the BEF constituted 60 divisions to the

rifle may not have been the greatest killer on the Western Front, but its ideational conception was linked fundamentally to the infantryman's understanding of his duty at the front.

The "Originals," those joined early in the war, could not survive the war with the same soldiers who had originally left to fight it; there came a point in the history of every battalion which served on the Western Front when it ceased to exist in its original form and had to reconstitute itself upon the shattered remnants of the original battalion. For the PPCLI this occurred on multiple occasions throughout the war.¹²⁸ Their first battle of no return would come at Frezenburg in May 1915. Frezenburg is remembered chiefly as a killing stand. Hugh Niven, for example, remembers his men doing their job, pouring rifle fire into advancing waves of enemy infantry after their barrage let up: "I went around and took bandoliers from dead and distributed them and after more bombardment new attacks gave us a chance for rapid fire at 150 yards and we stopped them again. More heavy artillery fire and

Canadians' four: "the non-Briton element of the BEF amounted to at best 18 divisions as compared with some 60 divisions from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales." Griffith, *Battle Tactics*, 28. For something of the wider "colonial critique," as Griffith calls the empire historiography, see: Terry Copp, "The Military Effort, 1914-1918" in *Canada and the Great War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David Mackenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 35, 55-57. Rawling points out that the first trench raid, which will be discussed in Chaps. 3 and 4, severely disturbed the "live and let live" system. Indeed, no less an memoirist than Siegfried Sassoon wrote that "The [raiding] idea had been revived early this year, when some Canadian toughs had pulled off a fine effort, and since then such entertainments had become popular work with the Staff." Sassoon quoted in, Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*, 47. Rawling also points out that the 1st Worcester Regiment raided German trenches some time during February, 1915. The PPCLI's was likely, nevertheless, the most famous of the first raids. For the longer term historiography see also, for example John F. Meek, *Over the Top! The Canadian Infantry in the First World War* (Toronto: Pendragon House, 1971). Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Limited, 1989). See also, Tim Travers, *How the War was Won: Factors that led to Victory in World War One* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military Classics, 2005). Shane B. Schreiber, *Shock Army of the British Empire: The Canadian Corps in the Last 100 Days of the Great War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

¹²⁸ As the Canadian Second World War historian Marc Milner explains, there came a point where the "old cadre," those originally recruited at the beginning of the war and generally made up of members of a certain locality (although, as we have seen, this was not true for the PPCLI), became casualties in sufficient numbers to wipe out the identity of the original regiment. He cites the example of the Carleton and York Battalion at the Gully in front of Ortona, the Black Watch at Verrières Ridge, or the North Shore Regiment at Carpiquet. Milner argues that this was the point that battalions became "nationalized," and that the men of the regiment became strangers to those who survived of the original cadre. Based on lecture given at Verrières Ridge on CBF tour 2014, confirmed in email with author July 27th 2016.

the infantry came on again but our rapid fire stopped them.”¹²⁹ The PPCLI simply did its job, relentlessly and mechanically pulling triggers, loading weapons, distributing ammunition, and killing the enemy. J.J. Burke remembers the killing as specifically motivated by the Germans’ execution of the Canadian wounded: “Germans open rapid fire and start attacking but we kept them from advancing far but they reach our trench and the dogs bayonet our wounded who cannot defend themselves. They paid pretty dearly for it as we knocked them over as soon as we saw them.”¹³⁰ The regiment took 385 casualties (95 killed and 290 wounded or missing) on May 8th alone, a number which represented approximately 40% of the marching out strength of the regiment from Winchester camp in England.¹³¹ Some were miraculously unhurt, or only slightly wounded, but a great many more returned after a period of convalescence in France or England.

Although decimated, the regiment continued due, in part, to the story of the stand and that story’s role in recruiting Canadians into the regiment. The battle was used to spur recruiting amongst the men of McGill University specifically, and other universities from across Canada. These two streams of men, the surviving Originals and the University Company men, were fused together in a similar defensive battle at Sanctuary Wood the following year, the third concerted German effort to take the town of Ypres. Later, after Sanctuary Wood, the PPCLI reinforcement stream was regularized although men still tended to volunteer specifically for service in the regiment. This was even true in 1918, when commanding officers of non-combatant units such as signallers and the Army Service Corps canvassed their men for volunteers to the regiment. This is how both Lynch and Gianelli joined the unit, for example.

¹²⁹ Hugh Niven, “Battle of Frezenburg,” 2, 31(53.1)-9.

¹³⁰ Burke, “Diary,” 31(17)-2.

¹³¹ “War Diaries 1914-19,” “Appendix 1 Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry Marching out State, Winchester 20-12-14,” 6, “Bellewaerde Lake, Belgium Saturday May 8th 1915,” 32.

As we have seen, the war left many surviving Patricia's in its wake and in the late 1950s and 1960s one veteran took it upon himself to collect as much information as possible from the surviving men who served with the regiment, William Bastedo. The former Captain who served with the Patricia's at the front between 20 January 1916 and 8 March 1917 (when he was struck off strength to become a Service Corps Officer) amassed a mountain of correspondence, all vying for a place in his proposed book of "anecdotes and memories." As time went on, he found himself in an increasingly untenable position regarding the unfinished manuscript. Money, which he had solicited from the veterans and their families, rolled in from increasingly impatient men, many of whom did not have their original photos returned. One can only tell people the thing is "almost done" for so long. Talbot Papineau read the "disillusionment novel" *Sonia* before voluntarily returning to the regiment in the summer of 1917, and it speaks directly to Bastedo's problem:

At the age of three-and-twenty Charles Templeton, my old tutor at Oxford, set himself to write a history of the Third French Republic. When I made his acquaintance some thirty years later he had satisfactorily concluded his introductory chapter on the origin of Kingship. At his death, three months ago, I understand that his notes on the precursors of Charlemagne were almost as complete as he desired. "It is so difficult to know where to start."¹³²

In attempting to gather up an anecdotal "folk" history of the regiment, Bastedo had been hugely successful in amassing research materials, but the amount of information he had available to him, much of it contradictory and much focused on things that Bastedo was not particularly interested in, was too much of a burden for the would-be regimental historian. For William Bastedo, sorting, collating, copying, and composing their history of anecdotes and memories became a Sisyphean task.

The stories that Bastedo received were often happy, wistful and nostalgic, even when dealing with combat. For example, an anonymous soldier sent in a story with the deliciously suggestive title of "Sweet Memories of Sugar Trench," which shows that even the fighting on the Somme front could, for some soldiers at some places, be a pleasant memory to reflect upon:

¹³² Stephen McKenna, *Sonia: Between Two Worlds* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917), 1.

One of my Most enjoyable and unforgettable days was Sept 15 1916. We were attacking just left of Courcellette, on the Somme... It was a beautiful day. No. 2 Co. halted in a small valley. For an hour it was rather quiet. Then came zero hour and we raced madly to the charge. Mitchell and I were rushing along together when suddenly about 30 yards in front of us a dozen or so white bandages were waving. As we got closer a bunch of Germans rose out of the earth. They threw away their rifles and equipment and with hands in the air shouted "*Merci Kamerad.*" We had taken or passed sugar trench without knowing we had reached it. A lovely ending to a lovely afternoon!¹³³

In this anecdote, we also see that these men, who had not suffered unduly in the advance, were less likely to kill during the interstitial moments after the barrage let up, as they happily accepted the Germans' surrender, and we also see that the difficulty of the fighting on the Somme front varied wildly depending on time and place. Overall, however, Bastedo realized that the men of the Patricia's "prefer slaughtering to being slaughtered."¹³⁴ The documents provide valuable insight into how men remembered their experiences with the regiment during the First World War, how they spoke of the fighting, dying and killing, and how they often chose not to speak of the killing itself as it was too painful to discuss.

¹³³ 475xyz, "Sweet Memories of Sugar Trench," ed., W.E. Bastedo, 16(1)-1.

¹³⁴ W.E. Bastedo, "Illustrations," 16(1.1)-1.

Chapter 2: Historiography

William Bastedo was not the first person to undertake a history of the regiment, although he may have been the first to focus on the narratives of the soldiers instead of their officers. Ralph Hodder-Williams, a professor at the University of Toronto who joined the 2nd University Company on June 28th 1916, composed the official history of the regiment, but – although an invaluable touchstone to both the veteran and the historian – it tended to focus on the conduct of the officers of the regiment.¹³⁵ Jeffery Williams, Hamilton Gault’s personal historian and archivist, also produced a history of the regiment, but his short work includes little more than a bare recitation of the facts interspersed with colourful sections that, although valuable, fall short of telling a complete history of the regiment.¹³⁶ Likewise David Bercuson’s modern semi-official history, which uses portions of the Bastedo files in crafting its narrative, tends not to focus on the detail of how the men actually killed as it is a survey of a century of regimental history.¹³⁷ This work seeks to fill in some gaps left by these authors by exploring common tropes employed by them, inquiring into their veracity, and looking to elucidate a more complete picture. It will focus on how men conducted themselves in their primary occupation as killers on the Western Front.

As was the case with Hodder-Williams’ regimental history, Winter and Prost note that “combat and combatants” were, more often than not, left out of the first draft of the history of the war.¹³⁸ This “great omission” was first combatted by the French veteran memoir anthologist André Ducasse who worked in earnest to “smuggle” the soldier back into the history of the war. Authenticity was key, and

¹³⁵ Take for example his narrative of Frezenburg, which but seldom refers to men at any level lower than the company (Jim Christie being an exception). Ralph Hodder-Williams, *Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry*, 2 vols. (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1923), 1:46-66.

¹³⁶ Jeffery Williams, *Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, 1914-1984: Seventy Years Service* (London: Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1972). See also, Jeffery Williams, *First in the Field: Gault of the Patricia’s* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Vanwell Publishing Ltd., 1995). Williams won the MC, was wounded at Courcellette and struck off strength on 20 September 1916.

¹³⁷ David J. Bercuson, *The Patricias: The Proud History of a Fighting Regiment* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2001).

¹³⁸ Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13.

the anthologist made sure that the sources he listed and annotated had “been there.” As he finds, most “flattered the public’s taste and confirmed their traditional conceptions of a melodramatic and gallant war: jovial pleasantries among the soldiers, the perfidy of spies, killing at close range... An athletic and sporting war for some; and to others, ‘hateful murders by brutes drunk on ether.’”¹³⁹ Following in his tracks, Jean Norton Cru developed a matrix of good and bad testimony, discarding “chauvinistic puff” and focusing on the “hardships, and the misery of their material experience.”¹⁴⁰ He realized that much of what he believed about the war was dictated to him by the literary biases that he had imbibed unconsciously: “You may have seen me express opinions while still tainted by these preconceptions, or literary, traditional ideas, which constitute what I call the ‘legend of the war.’ It was only gradually that I replaced these dogmas with the facts of experience.”¹⁴¹ As such, he tried to discard those narratives that relied too heavily on literary ideas. In the end, all of these authors had to grapple with what Claire Keith called “expressing the inexpressible,” finding that veteran testimony (*témoignage*) contains certain constant themes and narrative techniques that make them “conducive to literary analysis.”¹⁴² As we will see, this is also true when one focuses specifically on veteran testimony regarding the killing of the enemy, or – in the absence of such testimony – the details that are provided of the workmanlike manner in which men went about their occupation as killers on the Western Front. “Chauvinistic puff” was often how men went to war, and was an important means to tell their stories of the trauma of war, especially during the war itself. To excise what seems unbelievable when it was written by an actual participant of battle is to eschew the importance of the way in which the story is told.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 86. See also, André Ducasse, *La Guerre racontée par les combattants. Anthologie des écrivains du front* (Paris: Flammarion, 1932), i, 6.

¹⁴⁰ Winter and Prost, *The Great War in History*, 86.

¹⁴¹ Jean Norton Cru, “Letter to Alice (sister) 22 Jan 1917,” in *Lettres du front et d’Amérique (1914-1919)* (Aix-en-Provence: Aix Marseille presses universitaires, 2007), 212.

¹⁴² Claire Keith, *Exprimer L’inexprimable: Les Écrivains Combattants de la Grande Guerre* (New York: City University Press, 1993), 2.

In the Canadian context, the official historian A.F. Duguid's history of the war seldom dipped below the rank of lieutenant in its description of the Canadians Corps' efforts to affect the strategic situation and break the stalemate. Cook finds that Duguid spent much of his time – time that perhaps should have devoted to compiling the manuscript – defending the reputation of the Canadians to the British official historian Sir James Edmonds.¹⁴³ Other publications similarly wrote the soldier out of his own history, including Beaverbrook's *Canada in Flanders*, which focused almost exclusively on officers, thereby largely removing agency from the men under their command.

Following in the footsteps of historians Martin Middlebrook and Lyn McDonald, Denis Winter's study of men and war was an early attempt to categorically return the soldier to the British history of the war, but his focus is almost exclusively on the soldier as victim rather than the soldier as agent. He consciously follows Cru's maxim to focus on the "hardships, and the misery of" a soldier's lot, to the exclusion of the "puff" of chauvinism, perhaps failing to realise that the latter is an important element in how men can suffer the former. In *Death's Men*, Winter sought to remedy "the neglect of the individual soldier... By rummaging in the great mass of memoirs... a picture emerges of a new sort of war... It is made up of small details and large emotions. It is described by men who had little idea of time, place or importance."¹⁴⁴ Appearing at almost the same time as Paul Fussell's seminal work, near the fiftieth anniversary of the Great War, Winter tends to position his soldiers in the role of victims. In his chapter on battle, for example, he quotes the Labour MP Josiah Wedgewood as saying, "If you look inside a

¹⁴³ As Currie wrote to Duguid, "The old regular soldier was back at his game and clearly determined that the civilian soldier was not entitled to very much respect." Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 81. See also, Timothy H.E. Travers, "Allies in Conflict: The British and Canadian Official Historians and the Real Story of Second Ypres (1915)," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24 (1989), 315. Ryan Flavelle, "The Battle of 2nd Ypres and 100 Years of Remembrance," *Canadian Military History* 24, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2015), 319-321. Gustavson, "Competing Visions," 144-52.

¹⁴⁴ Denis Winter, *Death's Men – Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 12. The Canadian version of this book would likely be, Morton, *When Your Number's Up*. Morton's work is invaluable as background to the Canadian soldier during the war. See also, Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme, 1 July 1916* (New York: Penguin Books, (1971) 2001). Middlebrook focuses on the lives of ten soldiers at the Somme. Likewise, Macdonald focuses on the soldier's experience of Passchendaele in, Lyn Macdonald, *They Called it Passchendaele: The Story of the Third Battle of Ypres and of the Men Who Fought in it* (London: Michael Joseph, 1978).

uniform, a battle is a pathetic business. They all carry rifles and are helpless.”¹⁴⁵ This was certainly true for *some* of the engagements and *some* of the men in *some* of the battles on the Western Front, but men very often describe feeling powerful during battle, not helpless, and often vacillate between the two during their narratives. To focus on the killing is to return some iota of agency to the soldiers involved in these battles, some of whom were certainly as “helpless” as Winter claims, but others of whom provided a killing example for their peers.

Another factor that must be taken into consideration in the historiography is the idea that the war “brutalized” the soldiers who fought it. The idea that individual soldiers were brutalized out of caring about their fellow man by war generally, and by the act of killing specifically, is taken up by Antione Prost, a French historian, who argues that if we admit “that some people were brutalized” the most important question becomes, how did their “behaviors change in newfound civilian life?”¹⁴⁶ In answering this question, Prost has to take into account the fact that, not only did most soldiers not personally kill during the war, but very often they did not see the enemy at all: “If the vast majority of soldiers on the Western Front did not kill... it is [because their] opportunities to do so were not that frequent.”¹⁴⁷ Prost certainly appreciates some of the nuance of the situation, and how the war seemed to effect people differently, some even taking pleasure in the penultimate killing moment(s) of the war. He quotes a veteran who “had received the legion of honour” and become the director of a school after the war:

The war has made us not only corpses, cripples, blind. It also had, mixed in, beautiful actions of sacrifice and [self-]abnegation, which awoke in us and sometimes led to a climax [of] ancient instincts of cruelty and barbarism. It happened to me - and it is here that I [make] my confession

¹⁴⁵ Winter, *Death's Men*, 178. Wedgwood's service was primarily on the eastern front in Turkey and Palestine. J. C. Wedgwood, *Essays and Adventures of a Labour MP* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), 206.

¹⁴⁶ Antoine Prost, “*Les Limites de la brutalisation. Tuer sur le front occidental, 1914-1918*,” *Vingtième Siècle Revue d'Histoire* 81 (2004), 19. Translated by the author.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

– that I who had never so much as hit someone in the face, and I who abhors disorder and brutality, found pleasure in killing.¹⁴⁸

Note that the veteran is giving a “confession,” and implying that sinning is both pleasurable and brutalizing.

Authors whose focus is specifically on the combat arms can occasionally write the soldier out of their own history, focusing instead on doctrine and excluding the men charged with carrying it out. English and Gudmundsson, for example, provide what might be seen as the standard narrative of the battles of 1915, in which not a man below the rank of Field Marshal is named. Their description of the Battle of Loos in 1915 is emblematic of myriad historical accounts where the voice and individual actions of the soldier are entirely absent.

The attack of two British divisions at Loos... provides a heartbreaking case in point [of the relative paucity of artillery available to support offensive action in 1915]. Twenty minutes of bombardment, which appears to have caused the Germans no casualties, was followed by a pause of about half an hour. Then 10,000 men in twelve battalions advanced... At a range of 1,500 yards, the British advance met with a storm of machine-gun fire. Undaunted... [they] continued moving forward, presenting an enfilade target to a battery of field guns and a frontal target to the German rifleman and machine gunners.¹⁴⁹

Their fighting and dying as individuals and small groups has no place whatsoever in the narrative. The authors perhaps underestimate the novelty of the nation-wide trench siege system which had appeared over a period of months by the time the battle was waged, and consequently place the blame on poor doctrine. The problem was not necessarily a failure to grasp the importance of entrenched positions, which were a feature of German and British tactical doctrine from at least the Boer War on, rather it was the massive scope and armament and number of men, fielded by enormous industrial complexes and

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴⁹ John A. English and Bruce I. Gudmundsson, *On Infantry* (London: Praeger, (1981) 1994), 23-24.

societies which resulted in an entirely unprecedented state of empire-wide siege which consumed men almost as fast as it could invent, deploy, and fire ammunition.¹⁵⁰

The story of the British 1915 offensives on the Western Front, so quickly (and correctly) dismissed by English and Gudmundsson as a “disaster” and a “failure,” takes on a different hue at the tactical level, especially below the battalion. Andrew Rawson’s battlefield tour guide-book, for example, gives some sense of the scope and varied fortune of the men and formations involved in the battle. His write-up on the fortunes of a company commander from the 1/19 London Battalion, one of the “old army” units which was all but demolished in its original form during the battle, proves that ground was taken and tactical victories gained while all the while the strategic picture remained unchanged: “Captain G. Williams led ‘A’ company up the bare slope towards the final objective, Chalk Pit and the adjacent copse. Again, resistance was light and before long *the small quarry was taken along with two 85mm field guns*. Attempts to take the copse failed. [Emphasis added]”¹⁵¹ The picture that emerges in Rawson’s guidebook is one where the need for live grenadiers at a critical point was all that separated the consolidation of a hard-won position.¹⁵² When discussing a war that included so many people and theatres, historians who employ levels of analysis from the regiment (battalion) up tend to accomplish their goal of explaining how war happened without accounting for the individual will of the men who won the war. This is not necessarily a detraction from the veracity of their work, but rather a restatement of the fact that all histories (including this one) are edited creations that depend heavily for their creation on the goals and temperament of their creators. The men here studied wanted their stories to be included in histories of the war because they felt, rightly enough, that they had done as much or more than anyone else in winning it.

¹⁵⁰ Rawling’s work is useful in outlining the tactical and technological evolution of the fighting from the battalion downwards. Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*.

¹⁵¹ He is describing the advance of the 1/20th London Battalion during the Battle of Loos in 1915. Andrew Rawson, *Loos-Hill 70: French Flanders Battleground Europe* (South Yorkshire: Leo Cooper, 2002), 80-82.

¹⁵² Ibid.

Front-line soldiers remember combat, and comrades, and tend to have an extremely constricted view of their battlespace,¹⁵³ societies remember wars. The history of the individual must be subsumed, edited, and represented into the history of the collective. These “collective” versions of history then become the official “discourses of power,” the edited “heritage moments” used to present the public with a picture of their past, one that is politically useful to those who present it.¹⁵⁴ Together soldiers and their societies create a malleable set of dominant narratives that interpret war for a given level of society from local to international, and reinterpret it publicly for the individual, whatever their subject position.¹⁵⁵

To understand discourses of power within contemporary post-modern historiography one must look at the post-modern theorist Michel Foucault. For him, discourses of power, like the creation of

¹⁵³ Former Navy Seal Chris Kyle, for example, likens one’s perspective at war to “looking at an enormous landscape painting through a tiny straw.” Chris Kyle, *American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. History* (New York: Harper, (2012) 2014), 93.

¹⁵⁴ Vimy is the most common version of this trend within the Canadian historiography. See, for example, Tim Cook, *Vimy: The Battle and the Legend* (Toronto: Random House, 2017), chaps. 8,12-14. Alternatively, one could look at what Tim Cook described at a conference where he launched his book in 2017 as “an odious little book.” Ian McKay and Jamie Swift, *The Vimy Trap: Or, How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Great War* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016), 56-57, 220-8, chaps. 7-8. The fountainhead of the modern Vimy myth is of course, Pierre Burton, *Vimy*, (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2001), 294-308. Iacobelli describes the conscious editing of veteran narrative in the CBC’s 1960’s oral history in, Teresa Iacobelli, “‘A Participant’s History?:’ The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Manipulation of Oral History,” *The Oral History Review* 38, no. 2 (2011), 331–348.

¹⁵⁵ On memory being “revisionist” see, Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 25-30. See also, George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 8-10. For the example of Beaumont Hamel, and the first day of the Somme for Newfoundlanders see, Paul Gough, “Sites in the Imagination: The Beaumont Hamel Newfoundland Memorial on the Somme,” *Cultural Geographies* 11 (2004): 235-58. Samuel and Thompson point out some of the fallacies that we unconsciously imbibe from the time we learn to say “Fee fi fo fum I smell the blood of an Englishman.” Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, “Introduction,” in *The Myths We Live By*, eds., Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (London: Routledge, 1990), 1-22. See also, Peter Burke, “History as Social Memory” in Thomas Butler, ed., *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 106. John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-20. Describing the Vietnam War Memorial, Bodnar quotes Fortinbras in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* on this point, “I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,/ Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.” For the Soviet example see, Catherine Merridale, *Ivan’s War: The Red Army 1939-45* (London: Faber and Faber 2005), 321-3. For the broader Canadian example see, Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 120-6.

truth, are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.”¹⁵⁶ Concurrently, such discourses “limit alternative ways of seeing and knowing and so restrict alternative truths from emerging.”¹⁵⁷ The social theorist who often chose to don the historian’s hat (although ze may have found it ill-fitting) has done much to influence our contemporary understanding of structures of power and discipline. Charting the rise of the modern military organizational system, Foucault argues that the subject and object of military discipline have become conflated:

Military discipline is no longer a mere means of preventing looting, desertion or failure to obey orders among the troops; it has become a basic technique to enable the army to exist, not as an assembled crowd, but as a unity that derives from this very unity an increase in its forces; discipline increases the skill of each individual, coordinates these skills, accelerates movements, increases fire power, broadens the fronts of attack without reducing their vigour, increases the capacity for resistance, etc.¹⁵⁸

Discipline, like power, becomes an end unto itself within the military schemata, and allows for a more efficient exercise in that power which armies inherently possess; that which, as we have seen, essentially boils down to the licence to kill. As Foucault points out, “‘Discipline’... is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a ‘physics’ or an ‘anatomy’ of power, a technology.”¹⁵⁹ This is the type of discipline spoken of by Knight in his description of the glasshouse, and it is the negative coercive force that ensures that soldiers must kill, or at least place themselves into situations where killing is necessary.

Hannah Arendt, reflecting *On Violence* after another World War that had displaced (amongst millions of others) Arendt herself, sees power and violence as opposites. At the state level this relationship is not one where power increases as violence does, but rather that “[p]ower and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in, Keith Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance: Indigenous Communities in Western Canada, 1877-1927* (Edmonton: AU Press, 2009), 3. From, Michel Foucault, *the Archæology of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1972), chapter 1.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Knopf, 1975), 210.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 192.

jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance."¹⁶⁰ The battlespace of the Western Front was a contest between the power of two nearly equal political-military systems. As such, killing, which is the ultimate end of the violence of war and is committed under the legitimizing remit of the state, can be as imperilling to the power structure that decides on war as it is to the enemy. During the First World War, it was the projections of state power (industrially armed men) that found themselves in jeopardy, but their answer of the call to arms simultaneously imperilled the political power of the very states that armed men and sent them to the war. As the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, German, and Ottoman Empires discovered, war generally, and armed men specifically, can confer sovereignty's mantle upon themselves. None of them had any choice but to fight until some of them conferred the power of choosing who to fight more thoroughly upon themselves, ultimately so they could stop fighting ("peace and bread" being the operative phrase if not the subsequent reality). Indeed, this occurred with the PPCLI (to a very limited degree) after the war ended and a mutiny broke out over their treatment.¹⁶¹ Arendt also argues that both the will to submit and the will to command are deeply engrained in our psychology: "If we would trust our own experiences in these matters, we should know that the instinct of submission, an ardent desire to obey and be ruled by some strong man, is at least as prominent in human psychology as the will to power, and, politically, perhaps more relevant."¹⁶² Draycot tells of waiting in formation during a winter storm in Flanders just prior to marching off into the trenches. The men of Draycot's company, no officer being present to command them, were forced merely by the

¹⁶⁰ Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1969), 79.

¹⁶¹ See below, pg. 283.

¹⁶² Ibid., 39 Ibid., 39. See also, Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harpercollins, (1974) 2003), 1, 33, 45. This work details Milgram's famous experiment to see how far participants in the study would go when given orders to apply "electrical shock" to a stranger. As Milgram realizes, "Obedience is the psychological mechanism that links individual action to political purpose. It is the dispositional cement that binds men to systems of authority." "Of the 40 subjects, 26 obeyed the orders of the experimenter to the end, proceeding to punish the victim until they reached the most potent shock available on the generator. A man named "Bruno Batta," who was described as "a mesomorph of obviously limited intelligence" adopted, "a rigid mechanical procedure... [as he] forces the learner's hand onto the shock plate. All the while he maintains the same rigid mask."

impulsion of duty (and “impulse to submission”) to wait out exposed to the elements for hours *before* starting their march into the trenches.¹⁶³

This is the type of power that Arendt speaks about, it was the power that held men in the battle-space where killing was necessary, and it was often anger over the nature of that power that led men to kill out of betrayal of *thémis*. The dialectic of power and violence she describes between soldiers and their (political and military) commanders is clearly evidenced in the writings here studied, which describe a system that could pack-drill a man half to death, and then send him over the top at Vimy.¹⁶⁴ The ways in which men’s violence at the front was related to the discipline and power of the institutions of command behind them will be explored, and is an important element in understanding how they killed at the front.¹⁶⁵

The infantry is, by definition, the forward-most element of any organized group of fighting men: the private soldier and his junior officers are, by definition, the forward-most element of the infantry. Thus, these men constitute the forward echelon of those who make war. They were the embodiment of the global war that caused so many deaths in so many ways. So long as the terrestrial lines held, governments were free, or rather forced, to starve, bomb and torpedo civilians as they saw fit, indeed, such actions became a necessary adjunct to the continuation of the fight for land. The infantryman’s job and the government’s policy towards the enemy were one and the same: to take as many lives as practicable, and facilitate their comrades to do the same while maximizing their chances of survival to bring about the unconditional surrender of the enemy. During the war, it was men’s occupation to take life, and a good officer or NCO was one always scheming up new “stunts” to be tried against the enemy.

¹⁶³ Walter Draycot, “The ‘Princess Patricia’s First Entry into the Trenches in Flanders, January 4th, 1915 to Jan 8, ’15,” unpublished manuscript, 2, 31(4)-4.

¹⁶⁴ See below, pg. 304.

¹⁶⁵ For more on the relationship between command and punishment in the 2nd Canadian Division see, David Campbell, “Military Discipline, Punishment, and Leadership in the First World War: The Case of the 2nd Canadian Division,” in *The Apathetic and the Defiant*, ed. C. Mantle (Toronto: Dundurn, 2007), 304-307.

Good officers were responsible for motivating their men to do their job, facilitating their fire, and applying their own (roughly in that order).

Ultimately this work seeks to inquire into two major aspects of war, *power* and *violence*: that type of fundamental power which is wielded by men with rifles in their hands: that violence which existed as naked and purposed aggression harnessed and yoked, intermittently at times, by national governments. In the First World War museum at Peronne hangs a large painted wooden sign that the Germans placed at the *Hotel de Ville*, after they withdrew from the levelled town to the Hindenberg line in March 1917, "*Nicht ärgern, nur wundern!* [Don't be angry, just wonder!]"¹⁶⁶ The message is almost Hegelian in its logic: why be angry about the levelled ruins of towns and people, "*villages disparus*," as they are called around Verdun? Instead marvel and stand in awe of the power which wrought it. But it was fear that led the Germans to that point, and in besieging they felt themselves besieged (and were actually). This is what Alan Kramer tellingly calls the dynamic of destruction. As he argues, the war progressed in its destructive nature "from cultural destruction, in the sense of the deliberate targeting of cultural objects... to a 'culture of destruction' – the acceptance of the destruction, consumption, and exploitation of whatever it took to wage the war (including the lives of one's own soldiers, as well as the enemy's) in unprecedented numbers."¹⁶⁷ This culture was internalized by the soldiers fighting the war, and by those who commanded them. It was a culture that prided itself on killing prowess, but – often – simultaneously understood that there remained a disconnect between the ultimate object of life in uniform (killing enemy soldiers), and the mores and strictures placed on describing this object to a civilian audience. The two cultures often proved irreconcilable and often led to considerable psychic distress upon the soldier's bewildering return to peace.

¹⁶⁶ Author notes from visit, June 2014.

¹⁶⁷ Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 68.

Perhaps Walter Draycot gives the best example of the difficulty in describing the truth of the reality of war to an outside audience in the foreword to his unpublished memoir. Describing the genesis of his project, which arose out of a conversation with two friends at the city of Vancouver Library, he records that a “Mr. Douglas” had implored Draycot to write his memoirs as “the pages of history have yet to bear a story written by the ones who actually bore the brunt and Hell of battle. We have heard too much of *blarsted* Officialdom’s piffle.” Draycot responded that:

“to give the world the naked truth would land me – in jeopardy.” “Jeopardy[sic] be damned! The public, your comrades, all of us would support you!”... “Alright then, here’s one episode of what took place. And this is only a sample of many others which, *for decency sake, must remain unwritten.*” The story was told... “There you have it gentlemen!” Felix gasped, “My God!” to which the Scot added, “Inconceivable.” “Now, must the truth be told?” “W’Well,” stuttered the Scot, while Felix was muttering, “You could, of course, omit those ghoulish acts, and write of your privations, how you fared in the trenches, etc.” [Italics added]¹⁶⁸

It was the “goulish acts” which Cru sought to edit out of his history, and which Draycot did not feel comfortable elaborating upon. He, of course, remains silent as to what story he told of the war that had so affected these two educated and self-possessed men, but he did tell many others, and plenty of them are plenty ghoulish. He indicates the fundamental, almost axiomatic problem of discussing the truth of war, and the reality of his perceptions of it, namely that it could not and would not be believed or countenanced by a wider audience.

As we have seen, killing the enemy made up one of the topics of conversation for the soldiers. It is thus frustrating for the historian seeking to recreate the truths of soldiers’ narratives of killing the enemy to know that the most unadulterated renditions of these truths were seldom recorded, as the stories were told orally for the catharsis of the teller, or to teach, impress, or frighten the listener. One notable exception to this rule is provided by the research of Neitzel and Welzer who discovered extensive transcripts of the conversations of German PWs during the Second World War. Regarding the conversational style of soldiers, they find that “The narrators [tended to] position themselves in the

¹⁶⁸ Draycot, “*Pawn 883*,” 1-2.

innocuous role of the reporter – a tendency that historical eyewitnesses frequently maintain even today.”¹⁶⁹ Those telling the stories are not the most active actor in them, and they find that these narratives tended to be riven with contradictions, “without disconcerting the participants to any great degree... When captivated by a narrative, [the listeners] often do not even register whether details can possibly be true or not.”¹⁷⁰ Throughout this work we will encounter the psychic distance required in telling stories of killing the enemy, and the tendency of men to describe themselves in such a way as to mitigate their culpability in the killing.

Welzer and Neitzel also found that, for the German PWs they studied, killing remained in large part a matter of revenge, and that soldiers were most concerned with more prosaic realities than working into a position to pull the trigger on the enemy most of the time: “Revenge,” in this case for the partisan attacks on German officers, soldiers, and lines of communication in France, “was a powerful motivator and functioned regardless of individual soldiers’ political attitudes.”¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, “soldiers were more concerned with their own individual survival, their next home leave, the loot they could pilfer, and the fun they could have, and not the suffering of others, especially those considered racially inferior.”¹⁷² They also find that men tended to spend most of their long idle time discussing women rather than discussing fighting, killing or battle, an important factor in understanding the mindset of soldiers: “One excerpt from the protocols speaks volumes: 18:45 women 19:15 women 19:45 women 20:00 women.”¹⁷³ A solid two and a quarter hours spent discussing the opposite sex was the norm for these soldiers. Battle, for the Germans, was slaughter plain and simple (the German word for battle, *schlacht* is literally “slaughter”), but men tended to be less concerned about it in their long idle

¹⁶⁹ Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldiers: German POWs on Fighting, Killing, and Dying*, trans., Jefferson Chase (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2012), 102.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 170.

moments than they were with members of the opposite sex, a fundamentally important finding to understanding how men could create the psychic distance needed to kill when the need arose.

The best history available on the act of killing as an element in warfare is Joanna Bourke's. She realizes, at the outset, that "The characteristic act of men at war is not dying, it is killing."¹⁷⁴ The imperative to kill, to facilitate killing, and to train men to kill distinguishes the military's purpose as a group, from civilians: "The killing of the individual enemy... is the mission of the army... this mission has no civilian counterpart."¹⁷⁵ Arguing that there is pleasure to be found both in war and its conceptualization in the minds of non-soldiers, she finds that killing has been portrayed (and occasionally experienced) within a heroic schemata that she calls "the warrior myth."¹⁷⁶ Her title evokes the paradoxically loving nature of war, and the act of killing's overtones of sexuality; the intimacy is both between soldiers and between enemies, not to mention the widely varied sexual realities of young fit men in uniform: "Carnavalesque rites and fantasies drawn from a wide range of combat literature and films enabled combatants to refashion themselves as heroic warriors. Fear, anxiety, pain; these are only too familiar in combat. But excitement, joy and satisfaction were equally fundamental emotions, inspired by imagining that they had scored a good, clean 'kill.'"¹⁷⁷ Bourke's history is arranged thematically, not chronologically, and she thus looks at killing in war as a totality which occasionally leads her to conflate cultural events and sentiments that originated in Vietnam with those of First World War soldiers. Nevertheless, her work is an important contribution to the description of how men navigated the "moral universe" of war, and what their "agentic mode" was while doing so.¹⁷⁸ Although effectively trapped within an institution that legitimized "brutal behaviour," Bourke finds that men "were passionately engaged in elaborating ways of justifying killing in wartime... [but] as sentient

¹⁷⁴ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 1.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1, 3.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

humans, they insisted upon bearing a share of responsibility for their own actions... the purposeful actions of individuals were central to the telling of war stories.”¹⁷⁹ Bourke also realizes that fantasy and reality are inevitably and inextricably intertwined in the development and promulgation of killing narratives, a fact that is also central to this study: “the two could not be easily separated and, in terms of moral survival, it was crucial that it remained that way.”¹⁸⁰ The truth of this statement will become readily apparent in Jack Munroe’s case.

The most influential study of killing from a pedagogical standpoint is S.L.A. Marshall’s research into “firing ratios” during the Second World War. As a serving officer, he was first and foremost concerned with training his men, the soldiers of the American military. As such, his work falls into the category of history that sought to learn the lessons of the Second World War and, in so doing, contribute to the doctrine and training of the post-war American Army, retooling itself to focus on the communist threat: “Our weakness lies in this – that we have never got down to an exact definition of what we are seeking. Failing that we fall short in our attempt to formulate in training how best to obtain it, and our philosophy of discipline falters at the vital point of its practical, tactical application. I say that it is a simple thing. What we need in battle is more and better fire.”¹⁸¹ Railing against the strategic-level training that was a common theme of military academy training in many countries, including the United States, Marshall argues that it is not an understanding of war that a soldier needs to succeed, but an understanding of battle. In battle, “What motivates an infantry soldier to keep going with his weapons is the near presence or presumed near presence of a comrade.”¹⁸² The soldier’s view

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹⁸¹ S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1947), 23.

¹⁸² Ibid., 32.

of battle is different than his expectations and training had led him to believe: "He had expected to see action. He sees nothing. There is nothing to be seen. The fire comes out of nowhere."¹⁸³

Marshall is not best remembered for his insights into command and training, but rather for his chief conclusion that, in battle, only a small proportion of men actually fire their weapons in the direction of the enemy. As such: "Even allowing for the dead and wounded, and assuming that in their numbers there would be the same proportion of active firers as among the living, the figure did not rise above 20-25 percent of the total [number of soldiers present] for any action."¹⁸⁴ These conclusions were based on interviews with the survivors of the Battle of Makin Island. His resultant theory of "firing ratios," the number of men who might be expected to fire in battle, has had a deep and sustained impact on the historiography of killing. However, his research, methods and findings have come under increasing scrutiny in recent years, and both may have included a portion of outright forgery.

Robert Engen devotes several articles to demonstrating the impact that Marshall's monograph has had, and the fact that he may have drawn inaccurate conclusions from his own data. Marshall believed that his findings demonstrated "an inborn 'fear of aggression' he believed to be 'part of the normal man's emotional make-up'" a finding which Marshall believed to be applicable throughout history.¹⁸⁵ But Engen argues that this data, although perhaps applicable to a given soldier in a given battle, is certainly not applicable to every soldier, even the same ones who had not fired in the battle that Marshall studied, at every time: "What we really have from Marshall is a set of data examining how thousands of soldiers fought, in one action apiece... All that Marshall's data does, assuming it exists and is accurate, is establish that in any given action, most soldiers would not use their weapons."¹⁸⁶ This is the same point that Eric Knight has Monty make, that men may fight or flee in any given engagement,

¹⁸³ Ibid., 121.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 54.

¹⁸⁵ Robert Engen, "S.L.A. Marshall and the Ratio of Fire: History, Interpretation, and the Canadian Experience" *Canadian Military History*, 20, no. 4 (Autumn 2011), 40-41, 39-48.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 42.

and that it is impossible to forecast which will be the case, most men capable of both. As the research here presented will demonstrate, battles and soldiers were fickle things, and non-firing soldiers were often as important to killing the enemy as those who fired wildly and gave away their position. To not fire does not mean that a soldier, necessarily, has an aversion to taking life, but rather that the human behind the rifle judges that the time is not right to fire.

Marshall continues to find adherents among modern contributors to the narrative surrounding the biological and psychological realities of war. Lieutenant-Colonel Dave Grossman is less a follower of Marshall's work than a reincarnation of Marshall for a Global War on Terror world. Like Marshall, Grossman was a senior serving officer in the U.S. Army (and a former Ranger) when he conducted his study. Like Marshall, he is fundamentally concerned with altering the doctrine and training of soldiers in that organization. Like Marshall, Grossman is not himself a combat veteran, who nevertheless charged himself with a pedagogical mission to teach men how to better kill in the context of the American (and Canadian) military.

He seeks to get at the problem of non-combatant soldiers by posing the question, "Why Can't Johnny Kill?" His answer is drawn from Marshall: "the average and healthy individual... has such an inner and usually unrealized resistance toward killing a fellow man that... At the vital point... [the soldier] becomes a conscientious objector."¹⁸⁷ A psychologist by training, Grossman takes a biological approach to the question of killing, and posits a new understanding of the Fight (hero) or Flight (coward) response, noting that soldiers have two other options "Posture and Submit."¹⁸⁸ Regarding face-to-face killing, Grossman argues that, at close range, "Instead of shooting at a uniform and killing a generalized enemy, now the killer must shoot at a person and kill a specific individual. Most simply cannot or will not do

¹⁸⁷ Grossman, *On Killing*, 29.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

it.”¹⁸⁹ This research will posit that this is an oversimplification of Marshall’s theories, and that, if only two out of every eight soldiers might fire in any given action, that does not mean that – in the right circumstances – the other six would not fire in a different engagement, or under changed circumstances. All eight of those soldiers would likely be able to pull the trigger if they were faced with a situation that demanded they do so, but many did not face those situations at the same time. The man who had become a conscientious objector at the critical moment might have been running a message through to HQ detailing the location of that enemy, a job often considered more dangerous than holding in place. Maybe, having had his life saved by a comrade, the hitherto non-firing infantry soldier would go berserk after seeing that same comrade killed.¹⁹⁰ It tends to be only a matter of time and opportunity before a soldier at least *facilitates* the killing of the enemy, even if he chooses not to fire his weapon.¹⁹¹

Historians who deal specifically with soldiers and combat in the First World War can be seen as falling into two categories: those who take the “high” diction approach, and those who take the “war is hell” approach. (Of course, there is considerable overlap between these two categories and both can be employed simultaneously.) John Baynes would seem to fall into the former category, and the fact that

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 119.

¹⁹⁰ As one man describes during the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Bob Elston, “Drums of Death at Vimy Ridge,” *Liberty*, 18 Feb 1936, 38-41, CSM Charlie Baker, 31(22)-1.

¹⁹¹ An excellent exception that proves this rule can be found in Pasternak’s *Dr. Zhivago*. The doctor, conscripted against his will into a partisan unit of Red soldiers during the Russian Civil War, finds that – even though he has no desire whatsoever to take life – he cannot remain idle when faced with battle: “To look on inactively while the mortal struggle raged all around was impossible, it was beyond human strength. “It was not a question of loyalty to the side that held him captive or of defending his own life, but of submitting to the order of events, to the laws governing what went on around him. To remain an outsider was against the rules... So when the telephonist at his side jerked convulsively and then lay still, he crept over to him, took his cartridge bag and rifle, and, going back to his place, emptied the gun, shot after shot. But as pity prevented him from aiming at the young men whom he admired and with whom he sympathized, and simply to shoot into the air would be too silly, he fired at the blasted tree... Setting the sights and gradually improving his aim as he pressed the trigger slowly and not all the way down, as if not in fact intending to release the bullet, so that in the end the shot went off of itself and as it were unexpectedly... But alas! – however carefully he tried to avoid hitting anyone, every now and then a young attacker would move into his firing line at the crucial moment. Two of them he wounded, and one who fell near the tree seemed to have lost his life.” Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, trans. Max Hayward and Many Harari (New York: Pantheon (1957) 1958), 334.

he is writing a veiled regimental history certainly plays a role. Describing the composition of the Second Scottish Rifles, he finds, for example, that “they were probably as near unconquerable as any soldiers in the history of the world.”¹⁹² As we have seen, this was the boast of every self-respecting regimental soldier in the war. He points out that the attitude of the soldier was infinitely variable, and that during killing moments men’s feelings could vacillate widely between elation and dejection: “Within an hour a man could easily say ‘This is fun’, and ‘This is hell’, and genuinely mean it both times.”¹⁹³ The men of the regiment – drawn primarily from the “real lower classes” of Glasgow’s slums – are presented as docile, pliable children who were easy to lead.¹⁹⁴ This characterization, perhaps more common in the British historiography, tends to rob men of their battlefield agency such as is evidenced in the examples here explored.

Niall Ferguson, combining economic history and combat history, is able to measure the effectiveness of each side in killing the other in monetary terms: “Whereas it cost the Entente powers \$36,485.48 to kill a serviceman fighting for the Central Powers, it cost the Central Powers just \$11,344.77 to kill a serviceman fighting for the Entente.”¹⁹⁵ Ferguson directly addresses the question of how men killed, finding that men continued to fight due to a combination of “sticks” (such as the punishments described by Knight that could destroy any individual’s desire to buck discipline), carrots (a list of “quite humdrum things that kept men going” such as warm clothes, food, and drugs – alcohol and tobacco chief amongst them), and a more ethereal “Joy of War” which he describes as an “unpalatable thesis” that suggests that men may have “kept fighting because they wanted to.”¹⁹⁶ Ultimately he finds that men continued to fight because of the “anaesthetic quality” of combat itself, which we have

¹⁹² Baynes, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage* (London: Cassell, 1967), 42.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 157. As Moran has it: “The strength of the yokel soldier lay in his obstinate refusal to recognize danger when it was all around him.” Moran, *Anatomy of Courage*, 11.

¹⁹⁵ Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 336.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 346-357. See also, Tim Cook, “‘More a Medicine than a Beverage:’ ‘Demon Rum’ and the Canadian Trench Soldier of the First World War,” *Canadian Military History* 9, no. 1 (2000): 5-22.

already encountered. He quotes a private of the Royal Welch Fusiliers on this point: “I grew into a state of not-thinking, not-feeling, not-seeing. I moved past... men... some crying, some cursing some silent. They were all shadows, and I was no greater than they. Living or dead, all were unreal.”¹⁹⁷ As we will see, the idea that battle generally and killing specifically caused a disconnection from one’s own self is consistently proven.

John Keegan’s narrative of the Battle of the Somme would seem to fall into the “war is hell” category, as one who focuses exclusively on the Somme tends to see little other than the presence of a new kind of hell: “Accounts of the Somme produce in readers and audiences much the same range of emotions as do descriptions of the running of Auschwitz – guilty fascination, incredulity, horror, disgust, pity and anger – and not only from the pacific and tender-hearted.”¹⁹⁸ As Draycot points out, however, there was a significance to the Somme (writ large), namely that the British soldiers occupying the trenches in the sector no longer found themselves at the bottom of a creek – a tactical disadvantage that the PPCLI had inherited during their first entry into the trenches – and did not have to spend the winter under the water-line: “No-one informed us of the topography of this area but a creek... gave us a clue to being in a valley with the enemy on top of a ridge... This position he maintained along the line until July 1st 1916.”¹⁹⁹ The war was more than the first day of the Somme.

During the war itself, men tended to write with a high-diction that was almost unassailable. Often a soldier’s and an officer’s primary motivation in writing was to justify what was being done and to help spur efforts to recruit others to do the same. For a Canadian example, one need look no further than Talbot Papineau who consistently wrote and spoke movingly and well about the Patricia’s and

¹⁹⁷ Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 366.

¹⁹⁸ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (Berkshire: Pimlico, 2004), 256. See also, Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behaviour of Men in Battle* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 170-6.

Richard Holmes, *The Great War: A Combat History of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁹⁹ Walter Draycot, “The ‘Princess Patricia’s First Entry into the Trenches in Flanders, January 4th, 1915 to Jan 8, ’15,” unpublished manuscript,” 2, 31(4)-4.

Canadian's gallantry and effectiveness in the field, despite his private despondency over the utter folly of the war. His famous exchange with Henri Bourassa, the nationalist editor of *Le Devoir*, is only one small part of this wider effort to sell the war to those at home.²⁰⁰ But the breadth of his writings and activities during the war demonstrates that even propagandists might feel an intense need to belong, and to share the hardships and sufferings of their fellows. Moreover, his example indicates that the motivations of men to kill were complex and variable, and that they had much to do with what they thought women thought of them, and how they in turn thought about themselves.

²⁰⁰ The exchange is a staple of CBC documentaries and undergraduate reading-lists. Talbot Papineau, "Open Letter from Capt. Talbot Papineau to Mr. Henri Bourassa," in *Canadian Nationalism and the War* (Montreal: 1916).

Chapter 3: Major Talbot Papineau – Professionalism, Duty, Disillusionment, and Martyrdom

Before the regiment departed Canada, the assembled officers dined with the Governor-General as he bade farewell to his military secretary and several *aides-de-camp*, together with the newly arrived officers of the regiment including Papineau, still attired as a civilian. Here were gathered the elite British officers who led a newly formed but already “crack” regiment of veterans off to the war, a regiment whose private and vice-regal (and regal) patronage stood somewhat outside the authority of the very dominion it was formed in.²⁰¹ At dinner, Niven remembers Lieutenant Talbot Papineau standing out, and holding sway over the assembly with his inspired ability to speak to an audience, entirely off the cuff:

It came to Talbot’s turn and no sound came from the latest joined officer, so officers on both sides of him dragged him to his feet. He got behind his chair and addressed His Royal Highness... and then started the most wonderful flow of oratory I have ever heard and it lasted for nearly 30 minutes, about the part Canada was going to show its worth to the world etc., etc., etc.... His Royal Highness got up and walked down to Talbot’s chair and kept shaking his hand and then he said he had been in the army for fifty years and it was the first time he had ever heard an officer make a speech worth listening to.²⁰²

Papineau likely referenced killing Germans at some point during this speech but, characteristically, this is not what is remembered. Killing was part of the etcetera of the deeds that Papineau the regiment undertook to accomplish at war, indeed it was the organizing principle behind the formation of a unit of light infantry that could be dispatched immediately to the front. Papineau’s oratory, keen legal mind, and ability to write clearly and prodigiously marked him apart from other officers, eventually leading to a position on the staff of the Canadian Corps. For the three years following his speech on the glories

²⁰¹ The Governor-General may have communicated directly with the War Office to expedite the sailing of the regiment. “His Royal Highness did not want his daughter’s regiment under a politician’s thumb.” Niven, “Letter to E.W.K. McGregor, 5 Mar 1964, 31(53.2)-9. The story is substantiated by the regiment’s first RSM W.H. Marsden who writes that Colonel Farquhar quelled a potentially mutinous regiment by telling them that “The Gov. Gen... had been in contact with the War Office but they could not interfere with the Canadian Government.” “W.H. Marsden to Major Kearns,” 15 Mar 1962, 31(18)-9.

²⁰² Niven, “Talbot Papineau,” 31(53.9)-1.

with which the regiment would cover itself, Papineau would focus his considerable intellectual talents on the problem of how best to destroy and kill the enemy in a professional capacity.

Papineau seldom talked of himself, but he nevertheless corresponded widely and well. He was born second of four sons to Louis-Joseph Papineau and Caroline Rogers great-grandson of the famous Louis-Joseph Papineau who led *les patriotes* in the Lower Canadian rebellion, and was raised in the palatial seigneurial *Château Montebello*. Born into a powerful political family, Papineau proved an able athlete and scholar prior to the war. Having first attended McGill, he became a Rhodes Scholar at Brasenose College, Oxford. He was also an accomplished canoeist and amongst the founders of the first Canadian national hockey team while at Oxford (the team unsurprisingly won). A lawyer by trade, he sought and received a commission in the newly founded regiment, and over the following three years recorded his experiences in pamphlets, newspaper articles, letters and a treatise on soldiering during the war (not to mention his official correspondence). He kept up a steady stream of letters except after Frezenburg when he went into a deep despondency.

For just under a year Papineau led his men into and out of the trenches, and into and out of battles of varying scale and intensity. Throughout, he was amongst his men, the most important thing of all for a fighting regimental officer. The learning curve was steep, and those who left memoirs of the early months with the regiment tend to speak witheringly of the treatment they received by officers who had not come close to ironing out the myriad details necessary to trench warfare, and who were thus marched into the trenches in an utterly exhausted condition.²⁰³ Nevertheless, Papineau quickly learned the importance of leading from the front, especially in fighting. Discussing the role of the officer in raids on the enemy front-line – a role that he had considerable experience playing – Papineau spells out exactly the place that the officer should be, amongst the first in and the last out:

²⁰³ See, for example, Draycot, “First Entry into the Trenches,” 4-8, *NVA*.

*The officer will go forward in the attack with the Grenadiers but will remain behind the German parapet until Grenadiers and bayonet men have entered the trench. He will then enter himself and will visit the points of importance and having assured himself that the necessary dispositions have been taken he will signal that the Position has been captured. He should be the last to leave the trench but just before doing so he should signal again to notify his own trench.*²⁰⁴

He won the Military Cross (MC) for his actions the trench raid of 28 February 1915, had survived Frezenburg, spending the critical hours of the German onslaught helping to reallocate and resupply ammunition, sight guns and men, and rally the survivors to take up their arms, and had fought the Germans with varying success for almost a year when he composed these notes. Seldom would Papineau have had opportunity or inclination to aim rifle fire at the enemy; his job instead was to ensure that as many of his men as possible were in a position to do so. That is not to say that he did not kill, in fact his refraining from musketry allowed him to better facilitate his men applying aimed fire towards the enemy.

A survivor of Frezenburg, in May 1915, Papineau understood the value of musketry and its ability to halt an enemy advance. He was also cognizant of the effects of myriad other weapons that had revolutionized the battlefield, chief amongst them the machine-gun. It was the institution of musketry in the British army that taught and facilitated these murderous fights, an institution with which Papineau was intimately aware, and a practice that he wrote about in his treatise on trench fighting. The battle had turned on the “mad minute” musketry performance of the surviving men of the regiment, and demonstrated to Papineau that, despite high casualties, it was all but impossible to destroy sufficient garrison troops on a wide enough front to affect a breakthrough.²⁰⁵ At Frezenburg the PPCLI had done great execution at 300 yards or less, to the point that Richardson called it “a sort of nightmare of slaughtering wave after wave of Germans and seeing fresh waves advance over the bodies

²⁰⁴ Papineau, “Part III Trench Fighting,” 220-24.

²⁰⁵ The “mad-minute” was a part of the pre-war musketry qualification which called for 15 rounds fired from the prone position at 300 yards. See Spencer Jones, *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 94-99.

of the dead.”²⁰⁶ The enemy infantry assaults proved a release for the surviving Patricia’s. As long as the men came on, the guns could not fire. It was, in the words of an eye-witness, “an astounding silence with just an occasional rifle shot, and then we realized that the German infantry were upon us.”²⁰⁷ This meant that the men could fire. Many reported having their rifles overheat during the battle. Richardson, for example, has it that “Our gun barrels were blistering hot from firing hours on hours.”²⁰⁸

The war diaries suggest that the first wave of the assault began at around 5:30 AM, and was beaten back by “rapid fire” at about 6. Another bombardment began at 7 and ended at 9, supported by machine gun fire from some ruined buildings behind the German fire trenches which swept “our parapets both in fire and support trenches.”²⁰⁹ The second assault was renewed and met with rapid fire. The Patricia’s consolidated under heavy fire, gathering Small Arms Ammunition (SAA) from the battlefield and hauling boxes from a neighbouring dump. The right front of the PPCLI position, held by No. 1 Company, was obliterated, and Germans began to enter the trenches “bayoneting the wounded” as they came, and later planting white flags to “mark the extend [sic] of their advance.”²¹⁰ This effectively turned the flank of Papineau’s No. 2 Company, who could only maintain their positions against that volume of fire for so long. The local German success on the Patricia’s right wing began a series of desperate rear-guard actions as men fought to allow their comrades to withdraw, scavenging and throwing bombs and firing rifles to hold the enemy at bay, often dying in the effort. At first the left portion of trenches, held by No. 2 Company, maintained their positions and fired at the Germans, but were soon forced to abandon them and by 10 AM, the shattered remnants of Nos. 1 and 2 Company were forced to fall back on the support trenches held by Nos. 3 and 4 Company (Papineau having taken

²⁰⁶ T. Richardson quoted in, Robert F. Zubkowski, *As Long as Faith and Freedom Last: Stories from the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry from June 1914 to September 1919* (Calgary: Bunker to Bunker Books, 2003), 85.

²⁰⁷ Hodder-Williams, *PPCLI*, 1:62.

²⁰⁸ T. Richardson quoted in, Zubkowski, *Faith and Freedom*, 88.

²⁰⁹ “War Diaries 1914-19,” 8 May 1915, Bellewaerde Lake, Belgium, 31.

²¹⁰ Hodder-Williams, *PPCLI*, 1:63.

command of No. 3 Company at that point). A platoon of reinforcements from the Rifle Brigade who arrived in what was left of the front-line, and were recalled as rescuing angels by one surviving sergeant a few months later: “We saw the Angels, and they wore the letters ‘R.B.’ on their shoulders; and the biggest of the Angels were those who bore the machine guns on their shoulders too.”²¹¹ For the next four hours the Patricia’s fought to maintain their last remaining fortified position, the support lines at Bellewaerde ridge; despite the reinforcements, both flanks had been left “up in the air” by neighbouring units.²¹² The “climax” of the fight came between 10 AM and 3 PM when the Germans continued to press forward their advantage, although with ever diminishing vigour. Either three or four further waves (after the initial attack wave) of infantry attempted to carry on the assault from their newly captured front-line positions, but all were beaten back by the rifle and machine gun fire that the regiment could still muster. The official historian records that the last wave, which came at between 3 and 4 PM, “weakened, wavered, [and] collapsed under the answering rifle fire.”²¹³ That gives five or six total waves of infantry assaults, the weightiest coming at 9:00 in the morning.

The role of officers at Frezenburg, and all the other battles and engagements of the war, was to direct fire and lead men to positions where they could do so. Ideally, the men’s safety was their foremost concern, but there was only so much even the most conscientious officer could do. On the other hand, conscientiousness in applying fire would lead to retaliatory strafing and jeopardize the lives of his men. Good officers shared many or most of their men’s discomforts and a few more unique to themselves. Lieutenant M.S. de Bay, one of the other subalterns in No. 3 Company, wrote a letter to the editor of *The Star* describing the difficulties he had already faced just prior to the beginning of the Battle of Second Ypres: “Our company seems destined to have only two officers. Another officer who came over with one of the drafts and was attached to us was wounded a few days ago. Talbot is O.C., and I am

²¹¹ Ibid., 1:65.

²¹² Ibid., 1:66-68.

²¹³ Ibid., 1:70.

both senior, junior and every other kind of subaltern... I haven't taken off my boots for ten days, and at present I see no prospects of getting away for at least another week. Goodness knows what I shall look like by that time."²¹⁴ Nevertheless, it was spring and he was a fit young man, thus for de Bay, "I seem to thrive on it, and never felt fitter, although I am inclined to get tired rather quicker than I did at first."²¹⁵ He survived Frezenburg with the bandaged right arm that appeared so often in propaganda posters, and spent almost a year convalescing in England, sitting for six medical boards before being cleared for general service in April 1916. It is hard to imagine a soldier of an infantry regiment being sent back to the front with partial paralysis of the right arm, but an officer was another matter.²¹⁶ De Bay died at the Battle of Sanctuary Wood (also called Mount Sorrel, see Chapter 6), whilst his old OC was working as a staff officer and propagandist, increasingly a stranger to his regiment and himself.

Two accounts survive of Papineau's killing German soldiers on the Western Front. The first, which will be discussed further in the next chapter and contextualized against Munroe's account, was the story of his leading the bombing section during the first PPCLI trench raid of the war, bombing down the occupied trenches that the Germans held near St. Eloi. The salient feature of this account was the fact that he felt completely alone for a few staggering seconds. The oft cited letter to his mother describes something of the fear and loneliness associated with any such attack:

The colonel said, "There are six snipers that will go ahead of you then you will go with your bomber-throwers. Crabbe will be behind you with his men. All right! Lead on!" My stomach seemed hollow. I called my men and we fell into line and began creeping forward flat on our bellies. I had a bomb ready in my hand. We lay for a moment exposed and then suddenly we were all up and rushing forward. My legs caught in barbed wire, but I stumbled through somehow. I set my fuse and hurled my bomb ahead of me. From that moment, all hell broke loose. I never thought there could be such noise. I had my revolver out. A German was silhouetted and I saw the flash of his rifle. I dropped on my knees and fired point blank. He disappeared. I said to myself, "I have shot him." I fired into the trench at whatever I thought was

²¹⁴ *The Star*, (unknown city), 20 May 1915, newspaper clipping, 16(23.1)-1.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Michel S. De Bay, Service Record, RG150, box 2398A, file 54, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=350533> (25 Aug 2017).

there. Then my revolver stopped. I lay flat and began to reload. I was against the German parapet. I looked behind me and could see only one man apparently wounded or dead near me. I thought, "The attack has failed. I am alone. I will never get out."²¹⁷

Papineau's letter makes clear the fundamental fact of combat, that – despite the near presence of comrades – one still tends to feel utterly alone when in danger. Moreover, the simplicity of his statement "I have shot him" mirrors how many veterans spoke of killing in their memoirs, a simple, to-the-point statement of irrevocable fact. Papineau did make it out alive (although seven men of the PPCLI died during the attack), and Lieutenant Crabbe, at the head of his surviving section, joined up with Papineau and continued to fight forward until they encountered a "block" of sand-bags and wood that the Germans had hastily erected to arrest the advance of the Patricia's.

Papineau's second description of killing was written in response to a female acquaintance and friend, Cecil Buller, and tells of an encounter in No Man's Land. Of no relation to Colonel H.C. Buller, who commanded the regiment after Farquhar's death and who was killed at Sanctuary Wood, Cecil Buller was a well-born artist from Montreal who resided in London and Paris during the war. Their correspondence ranged over several years, but was limited since they were both busy people. She had asked for that most difficult thing to express, the truth about his experiences of the war. After decrying his conscious mind's inability to even think about the war, Papineau immediately brings up killing another human being – after all, killing ("a slow sort of murder") was the whole point:

You give me too large an order in asking for reflections and impressions. I simply live – live from day to day and do as best I can what the day requires. Thought seems suppressed. Seems an unnecessary effort when any moment the mind may cease. I have a belief that sub-consciously I am doing a lot of thinking and someday I will make use of it. *So far roughly this appears to me as a slow sort of murder. I have personally only killed one German – he was a shadow – a mere impersonal thing. I was glad to see him drop. I was anxious to repeat the performance.* But in daytime I should dislike to kill. I have seen many horrible sights. Men have been killed over and over again by my side. I have had to dress wounds. My coat has been saturated with blood. I

²¹⁷ Letter quoted in whole at, "The Aftermath of the Attack," 1 March 1915. *PPCLI 100th Anniversary* <http://100thanniversaryblog.blogspot.ca/2015/03/the-aftermath-of-attack.html> (24 Nov 2017). Also quoted in, Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 144. See also, Colin David Garnett, "Butcher and Bolt: Canadian Trench Raiding During the Great War, 1915-1918," Masters thesis, Carleton University 2011, 25-29.

have told you I think how a bullet penetrated 2 coats but only winged me. Another time a bullet passed between my outstretched fingers on the ground. [Emphasis added]²¹⁸

A few elements jump out that are pertinent to this study. Papineau's statement that he should "dislike to do it in daytime" seems important, a loaded phrase implying that killing was work best done at night (a perhaps deliberate double *entendre* that speaks to the fact that killing done at night is much more sanitized than that done during the day). The enemy is referred to impersonally and dispassionately, his humanity being intentionally masked, as was their encounter at night in No Man's Land. The man becomes a shadow, which seems likely a reference to his shade or ghost. Likewise, he demonstrates his pride in the "performance" of his most fundamental duty ("performance") while separating himself psychologically from the act and the morality of it (what Theweleit called "a sudden absence"), tempering it against descriptions of the wounds of his comrades and the near misses of the enemy.

In the end, however, he was ultimately led to a perfectly truthful and disheartening conclusion: "My nerves were just beginning to go to pieces. When about a week ago we were brought here for a rest. It has made a different man of me. I am ready for anything again. But how vile and miserable the war appears. I see no sign of its ending. How can it end?"²¹⁹ It was a greatly aged Papineau who composed his treatise on the war as he knew it six months later, having endured the merciless killing at Frezenburg. However, in both documents he was saying much the same thing, that the war was a terrible and murderous affair, but that it was also an unique adventure which fell within his duty to himself and his regiment. In his celebrated first letter to Beatrice Fox, the Philadelphian sculptress, Papineau makes this point more jauntily and less emphatically. As he wrote on June 24th, 1915, "Since August I have been a licensed killer, since January I have tried to kill – I have succeeded in not being

²¹⁸ Talbot Papineau to Cecile Buller, 2 Apr 1915, Cecil Buller Fonds, MG 30 E114, vol. 96, LAC.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

killed at any rate.”²²⁰ His next letter, written before he could have received a reply, further expounds on the killing and his reasons for doing his best to murder the Hun: “A few moments ago, several shells whistled overhead and exploded down the street. A good bag, I understand, an old woman and a baby killed and a little girl of seven has lost the fingers of her right hand... the only way to stop these Germans is to keep killing them. But how I hate it!”²²¹ For Papineau, and the Patricia’s, the war needed to be fought; the question was how to do it while leaving open the possibility of survival.

Over time, as his correspondence with Fox deepened, he unburdened himself about the nature of his job and the fear associated with the killing moment, which was also the dying moment: “the more acute the inner throb when a machine gun barked and I thought of the time to come when I should have to charge into that rain of bullets and then suddenly cease to be, or slowly in pain realize the coming end of all things.”²²² But the fear of death was not the only terror that lurked in his imagination. There was also the fear of killing:

I am not by nature intrepid, nor even quarrelsome enough to make fighting enjoyable. On the contrary I shrink from the naked disclosure of human passions – I dislike intensely loss of control, drunkenness, insanity, hatred, anger, they fill me with a cold horror and dread. But to see a man afraid would be worse of all. To have to kill a man in whose eyes I saw the wild fear of death would be awful. I almost think I should stop and let the fellow kill me instead. There should be no heroism in war. No glorification – no reward.²²³

“Should” was the operative word, but as Papineau well knew, all of those things were present at the war, behind the lines anyway. Moreover, his fears about killing existed irrespective of the fact that he had killed enemy soldiers, at night, with bomb and pistol-fire. Whereas he might privately decry the very nature of war, publicly he never veered from the party line urging his countrymen to do everything possible, especially enlisting, to defeat the enemy. Professionally he applied his talents to detailing some

²²⁰ Papineau to Fox, 24 Jun 1915. Quoted in Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War* (Toronto: Harpercollins, 1992), 211.

²²¹ Ibid., 211-212.

²²² Ibid., 215.

²²³ Ibid., 216-216.

of the ways that killing could be accomplished efficiently. For Papineau, war – and his job as an infantry officer – boiled down to a “licence to kill” and participate in a “slow sort of murder,” a murder which he decried but consistently abetted.

Papineau’s masculinity was tied up in his status as a front-line officer. Writing Fox while on leave to receive the MC in October 1915, he offhandedly makes an important statement that speaks to the masculine motivations of many soldiers in deciding to “do their duty”: “There were seven women whose husbands were at the war, *only four real men*, one with arm in a sling and another with crutches.”²²⁴ Papineau believed that service in uniform was the only unequivocal mark of masculinity, a masculinity which, at the front, led him into the cultivation of a “daredevil carelessness.”²²⁵ Papineau also saw his service at the front as equating to a licence to behave as he saw fit outside of the line.²²⁶ The parties were legendary. At one, on the Isle of Wight hosted by an old girlfriend from Montreal who had married a British businessman: “We were given cocktails in feeding bottles. I was the bad boy... I pulled the girls’ hair and slipped under the table and pinched their legs, so that everyone jumped screaming onto their chairs. One sober mother pursued me beneath and took my shoe. I captured hers and filled it with champagne, and she filled mine with jelly.”²²⁷ We see the idea that “real men” were free to act, party and love as they saw fit recurring throughout the veteran narratives here studied. But their freedom behind the lines was tied to the lines themselves, an area where fear ruled, and – as Roper argues – put paid to the “stoical ideal” and even gamesmanship itself.²²⁸ Papineau acted freely behind the lines because he knew the prison of duty that was waiting for him at the front. Finding

²²⁴ Ibid., 222. Holmes notes the tremendous psychic distance between those at the front, and those at home. Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), (ebook) 891-903.

²²⁵ Papineau quoted in Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 215.

²²⁶ This is a common theme amongst Patricia officers, and perhaps the best example is Agar Adamson’s consistently removing himself to Paris without leave when the Regiment had rotated out of the front-line trenches, or Charlie Stewart’s “Falstaffian” approach to command.

²²⁷ Ibid., 222.

²²⁸ Michael Roper, “Between Manliness and Masculinity: The ‘War Generation’ and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950,” *Journal of British Studies*, 44, no. 2 (April 2005): 343-362.

himself alone in London, which Gwyn rightly calls the “City of Earthly Pleasures,” he decided to spend some of his pay in exchange for female companionship:

Because with war I had ceased to dream, I have sought the hollow shams of easy and immediate gratifications. Because life might suddenly end, I have not waited for the slow and doubtful realizations. I wanted affection – beauty – laughter – companionship – I wanted them immediately so I bought them – the cheap, ready-made articles, and so I have cheapened myself until I was sick with disappointment and glad that tomorrow I go back to the front and so perhaps end it all.²²⁹

In fact, ironically, during this encounter (probably) Papineau contracted a disease that kept him out of the line for weeks, gonorrhea. Instead of returning to the front to “end it all” as he so desperately wished on the hung-over morning after, he was spared from further front-line service as a direct result of the fact of his VD. He chose to spend his idle time during convalescence writing a treatise on how the war was being and should be fought.²³⁰ As we will see, this fact also set the conditions for his martyrdom.

Talbot Papineau provides an outstanding example of how men codified and understood the fighting principles that, although relying heavily on British army doctrine, he worked out on his own based on his experiences at Frezenburg and in the trenches: “In some respects, this trench warfare resembles the early Indian fighting of North America and we may learn from the redskins some hints as to the manner of approaching a stockade or trench undetected by the garrison or of surprising the scouts and scattered parties of the enemy.”²³¹ Papineau reflected thus on the state of modern warfare in his unfinished manual to fighting in the trenches. The narrative is pedagogical both to his reader and to the author, who is learning the lessons of a year at the front by writing them down – in a remarkably

²²⁹ Ibid., 224.

²³⁰ The fact of his VD, and existence of “Trench Warfare” and “Trench Fighting” seem to have escaped Gwyn, who presents Papineau’s career change as a chance meeting with Aitken, the way that Papineau portrayed it to his mother, Caroline. Gwyn states that he “needlessly flagellates” himself in his letter to Beatrice, but the truth is somewhat more complex and involved a pint of “5 per cent. solution of protargol” applied daily to his anterior urethra for a week. J. E. R. McDonough, *The Practitioner’s Encyclopaedia of Medical Treatment* (Oxford: Oxford Medical Publications, 1915). *Gonorrhea Treatment during WWI*, <http://www.vlib.us/medical/gc.htm> (4 Aug 2017).

²³¹ Papineau, “Part II Trench Warfare,” 180.

structured, concise and incisive fashion. It is the notebook of a man who, having lived through the worst parts of the war, had learned the most important elements of its character. Papineau sums up that character as “a slow sort of murder.”²³²

His notes stretch over to an impressive 260 hand-written pages before abruptly stopping, and Papineau focuses on two related, indeed inseparable parts of life at the front, “Trench Warfare” and “Trench Fighting.” The former category is described in terms of life, and the latter in terms of taking it. In “Trench Warfare,” he undertakes to “describe the LIFE of officers and men in the trenches during those periods of comparative inactivity when the opposing lines are merely garrisoned and hold [pending] a resumption of active operations. The keynote of this life is unending vigilance and hard-labour.”²³³ In “Trench Fighting,” he sought to “examine the methods and the manner of the active fighting in trench warfare which all that precedes has been merely preparatory.”²³⁴ Two sides of the same coin: you cannot fight effectively without learning to survive as best as possible.

Papineau begins “Trench Warfare” just behind the lines, and details the necessary preparations for a relief of the front-line (fire trench) or “making a Relief.”²³⁵ An officer of each company was to perform a reconnaissance (although Papineau does not use the term) and tour the trenches, preferably by daylight, noting that, by early 1916, the construction of communication trenches had progressed sufficiently such that it was often possible to move about by day. The emphasis was on travelling light and gathering as much useful information as possible: “officers should provide themselves with notebooks and a map of the District. Waterbottles and rations need be taken only if the journey is likely to be a long one. Refreshment of a satisfactory kind are often to be found in the hospitable trenches.”²³⁶ Whilst touring the trenches, the officer was to acquaint himself with twelve separate items of

²³² Papineau to Buller, 2 Apr 1915, *LAC*.

²³³ Papineau, “Part II Trench Warfare,” 1.

²³⁴ Papineau, “Part III Trench Fighting,” 138.

²³⁵ Papineau, “Part II Trench Warfare,” 3.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

importance ranging from the exact boundaries of his section of the trench, to the position of his own shelter, to the position of the signallers, to the position and number of the latrines.²³⁷ Knowing where his men could poop, an underrepresented necessity of a soldier's life, was a key consideration for good officers. The officer was also, more importantly, to familiarize himself thoroughly with the defensive position from a tactical standpoint, including the whole lexicon of defensive warfare that Papineau had become so familiar with: saps, mining operations, sniping positions, the number and position of loopholes and if any of them had been "spotted," wire entanglements, listening posts, fire bays; "When all this has been done it is possible that an agreeable adjournment may be made to a dug-out or to the Battalion HQ for light refreshments."²³⁸ The emphasis was throughout on the health of the men. They were to be as thoroughly rested as possible, ideally in billets close to the firing line with, ideally, a few days' rest in advance of the relief:

Troops must not be taken into the trenches in an exhausted condition or – especially in cold weather – after a long march. This error was made last winter with very unfortunate results. The men were exposed to severe climactic conditions after exhausting marches when their resisting powers were weakened and in consequence we suffered heavier losses from frost bites, fevers and rheumatism than from the enemy's fire.²³⁹

For example, Albert Edward Horton, the thirteenth man to attest in the regiment, a labourer who had served with the Northumberland Fusiliers for nearly twelve years prior to the First World War, was invalided due to frost bite suffered in the first months of the war, a common complaint.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Ibid., 9-10.

²³⁸ Ibid., 10-14

²³⁹ Ibid., 4.

²⁴⁰ Ralph Stanley Horton (1274505), Service Record, RG150, box 4514, file 17, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=473866> (4 Aug 2017). Draycot's description of the exhausting marches and poor billets is filled with a vitriol that Papineau could not quite muster in his account. What for Papineau had been a staff-work blunder was, to Draycot, nearly the end of his life. Draycot, "Paw 883", 23-39. F.G. Young also recalled the same scene, and bitterly remarked that they had to stay in the trenches at Polygon Wood for nineteen consecutive days without relief, a common and embittering experience for the Originals who arrived in early 1915. It took the regiment's officers some time to realize the importance of relieving their men and ensuring that they were not subjected to long forced marches prior to going into the trenches, but there was only so much they could do. F.G. Young, untitled memoir, 1954, 2-3, 31(31)-13.

Inspections of the men were then undertaken, the most important of which (especially in winter, or wet weather) was the foot inspection. Ideally, this would take place in a warm billet, and oil or grease would be applied to the men's feet, whether they wanted it or not. Papineau cites "medical opinion" and, more authoritatively, "the practices of the North-American Indians who in winter greased their bodies to protect them from the cold."²⁴¹ After feet were inspected and greased, rifles were to be inspected, ensuring that sufficient oil was applied and that all breeches were covered. Shortly thereafter, the men were to fall in, shake out into their order of march, and commence the movement to the trenches, stopping *en route* at the "dumping ground" to pick up the necessary trench accoutrements:

all supplies must previously have been arranged by the C.Q.M.S.'s into one man packs. Sand bags should be carried in two bags 30 empty bags in each tied together and slung over the shoulder one in front one behind. All rations should be similarly packed in sacks. One loophole plate is a load – so is one floor board. Should a load be too heavy for one man – two men should be detailed to take turns. A form of stretcher has been adopted in some places to carry loads up to the trenches.²⁴²

Papineau presents the relief as taking place on almost a man-to-man basis, with each soldier of the relieving Battalion pairing off with one of the company to be relieved, and learning something of the position from that man before he departs. Then, if no attack was imminent, the soldier would begin his sentry shifts and the endless continent-wide fight would continue with a new man at a new place with a different badge on his shoulders, ideally ready to carry on the fight. Throughout, as Papineau says, "There is always too the moral or mental strain of the possibility of sudden death or injury."²⁴³ The two "paramount objects of a trench commander" were maximizing the defensive value of the position, and providing maximum safety and comfort (relative term) for the garrison.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Ibid., 25.

²⁴² Ibid., 37.

²⁴³ Ibid., 3.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 5.

Most of the fighting on the Western Front was incidental, and this is where Papineau begins his “Trench Fighting” section. Although at any one time or place munitions were being fired with the intent to kill, it was far less likely that at the same time and place, the infantry would be advancing over the top to take ground. There are of course spectacular exceptions to this rule, the first two and last two months of the war for example, the Somme (1916), Verdun (1916), the *Chemin des Dammes* (1917), the battles in the Salient either to defend Ypres (1915, 1916) or break out from it (1917). Some of these battles ended up stretching over weeks and months as men fought according to the will of their commanders, and the realities imposed upon them by the enemy. Throughout them, attacking or defending battalions could hope to be relieved by other units for a spell in the support lines or resting (with the possible exception of the Nivelle Offensives in 1917).²⁴⁵ Although no tour was “quiet,” a good number of any soldiers’ tours would, in the aggregate, be relatively free from going over the top and seeing and engaging the enemy. Usually (but not always), if you kept your head down at the right times and learned how to maximize cover and even return fire at the right moments, you stood a good chance of surviving at the front, for a while.

Of course, this was not always the case. Niven tells of Lieutenant Edward Oliver Carew Martin who was thrice wounded “without a full day[']s service.” In March 1915, while being guided to his company in the front-line by Hugh Niven, Martin was hit in the arm and evacuated. On August 4th, 1915, again on his way to the front-lines, a German machine gun opened up on a large carrying party some distance behind the lines. Martin was the only casualty, a bullet passing through his leg. By December 1915, the “very good looking, beautifully dressed, [and] well educated” subaltern again returned to the battalion, but this time Niven decided that he was too unlucky for the front-line, and got him a job as *aide-de-camp* to the divisional commander. There he was taken on the staff of the 7th Brigade, residing

²⁴⁵ See for example, Leonard Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 175-214.

miles behind the lines at a chateau, that is, until he was shot by a “drunk-crazed private.”²⁴⁶ Martin lived until 1960.

Most of the troops in closest contact to the enemy are what Papineau called garrison soldiers. This phrase, which had a clear pre-war definition as those troops who garrisoned fortresses, denotes the scale of the siege being undertaken by the PPCLI and every other unit manning a portion of the line on either side. The Germans were laying siege to an entire country, and every soldier was thus a member of a garrison of the titanic network of fortifications that ran from the North Sea to Switzerland.

One of the key components of the officer and/or NCO’s leadership within the battalion was the ability to control the fire of their men, and employ it to maximum effect. After arriving at the Fire Trench, Papineau makes explicit the fact that random firing should not be permitted. For Papineau, the problem was not – as Grossman and Marshall would have you believe – an unwillingness to fire, but rather the tendency of men to open a reckless and ineffective fire by night which, if left unchecked, quickly burned through the available stock of small arms ammunition: “Both Day and night but especially at night there is a continual intermittent rifle fire [but] 90% of this fire I should judge was not aimed at any special target. During the day men often pop over the parapet and fire haphazard[ly] at the enemy’s trench in the hope presumably of an accidental [hit]. At night the aim is even less [definite]

²⁴⁶ Niven, “Carew Martin of Victoria,” 1-2, 31(53.1)-9. Martin’s service record substantiates most of Niven’s claims, although he returned to France with the 72nd Battalion after his second wounding, and was with them when they went overseas for three months before being taken on staff. Thus, he would likely have seen some front-line service during that period. He was eventually taken on the staff of the 11th Brigade, in which capacity he was shot by a drunk-crazed soldier: “G.S. Wound Left Chest passing into cavity above and to left of base of heart through the lung and out the back of the shoulder blade, Immediate danger to life is great.” Eight people witnessed the event or its aftermath. Private R. Vona, was sentenced to life of penal servitude, mitigated to 10 years penal servitude. He was drunk and quarrelsome and had absented himself from parade. He fired a shot in his billet, which naturally attracted attention. Someone yelled out “here comes a Staff Captain” and Vona said “watch me get him.” Fascinatingly enough, Vona speaks the same words that were used by some of the men here studied to describe “getting” the enemy. Edward Oliver Carew Martin, Service File, RG 150, box 5976, file 4, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=201450> (4 Aug 2017).

and the target usually invisible.”²⁴⁷ This is not to say that Papineau judged all rifle fire to be useless, but – when he first arrived in the trenches – most of it was ineffective. Instead, the men should be made to fire on some discernible target, “such as enemy loopholes or of sandbags over the trench or suspected sniping positions.” There were few enough targets anywhere in the massive trench networks, most of the inhabitants taking as much cover as possible at any given time. Rather, men’s fire should be directed behind the lines at reliefs or crossroads to “annoy” the enemy. Papineau recognized that machine guns or rifle batteries were much more effective instruments for successfully causing casualties during these “strafes” by “giving [Vickers or Lewis machine-guns to] a few [reliable] rifleman who, knowing the range and direction may at certain favourable hours fire frequently an occasional shot.”²⁴⁸ Again, the control of fire from the sentry to the section up is all important: “A certain section may then be ordered to fire in the direction indicated but word should be passed to the trenches on either side as otherwise the rapid fire will spread by contagion and there will be a great waste of ammunition.”²⁴⁹ On the 13th of April 1915, the battalion issued specific orders to reduce the amount of rifle fire as the consumption of “S[mall] A[rms] A[mmunition] has been too high,” and the order was repeated later in the month.²⁵⁰ Good NCOs and officers were to control the rifle fire of the men under their command to make it as efficient as possible.

Overall, we see a consistent effort to expose the enemy to *controlled* fire, shots that have a higher probability of success, and this went for all weapons including rifles, rifle batteries, rifle grenades, machine guns and trench mortars. Each of these weapons systems, moreover, would likely evoke an

²⁴⁷ Papineau, “Part III Trench Fighting,” 142. This could perhaps be seen as falling in line with Ashworth’s conception of the “live and let live” system.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 148-9.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 145.

²⁵⁰ The orders also continually warn against gawking at planes, or explosions, or “wasting” rounds against planes. “Battalion Orders,” March-May 1915, 34(2)-3. The order is repeated throughout the battalion records. See, Battalion orders: field note book, 29 Mar. 1915 - 02 Aug. 1915. 34(3)-3. Battalion orders: field note book, 22 Mar. 1915 - 02 Apr. 1915. 34(4)-3.

enemy retaliatory response, which – Papineau argues – must be considered when deciding whether to fire:

The utility of the trench mortar appears principally in its destructiveness of trenches rather than in its destruction of life. The noise of the discharge can be heard several seconds before the explosion of the bomb and the bomb itself may even be seen by a keen eyed observer upon its actual flight... I have seen our men deriving amusement by “dodging” the bombs thrown by a hostile mortar. I think it should be recognized that a trench mortar can only be effectively used as a means of destroying the enemy’s works.²⁵¹

Papineau believed that the relative inefficiency of the trench mortar at killing, and especially the fact that “it is certain to draw a retaliatory fire from hostile artillery or trench mortars,” meant that the weapons should be removed from battalion command and placed under specially trained men of the brigade.²⁵² Then the advantages of the Trench Mortar, which could “fire more accurately and effectively than artillery and incidentally with less danger to the garrison of the trench,” would be fully exploited for special purposes proposed by battalion commanders.²⁵³ To further protect the garrison soldiers, they “should be previously evacuated” when the mortars were set to fire.²⁵⁴

Papineau’s advice on the employment of trench mortars mirrors that of a contemporary publication aimed at explaining the fighting at the front to Canadians at home. It is evidence of the fact that these lessons were being widely learned by those at the front, and that the killing – described in the publication in terms of a sport, or a game – was often motivated by a desire for retaliation:

Sometimes a debonair young subaltern comes along with a pretty toy from Vickers called a trench mortar. He is on the look-out for a good “pitch.” Often he is anything but welcome, because the men know that, as soon as the Huns locate the cause of their discomfiture, their section of trench will become the object of unpleasant attention from German artillery... If, however, Fritz has been indulging in a little “hate,” a trench mortar is most welcome; and men crowd around like school-boys, in delighted anticipation of the fun.²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Papineau, “Part II Trench Warfare,” 168-9.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ontario Department of Education, *Canada’s Part in the Present War* (Toronto: A.T. Wilgress (Legislative Assembly of Ontario), 1918), 57-60.

Men's attitudes towards taking life were widely variable, and reflected their circumstances, especially as regarded the enemy.

As we have seen, Papineau clearly points out the counter-intuitive necessity of the officer to ensure his men do not fire too much, or at nothing, going so far as to limit the men to a "definable number of rounds per day," and that they should feel free to abandon tactically indefensible or hard-pressed terrain, so long as they can then apply effective fire on the enemy. This is true for Papineau's section on defensive fighting for sap-heads, and for his section on raiding portions of the German line. His description of the defence of a listening post, for example, has it that the first thing the occupants of a listening post or sap-head (a position pushed forward of the main "garrison" trenches) should do upon learning of a German party's approach is to quit the post as quickly as possible:

At night one or two scouts should be out beyond the sap if work is progressing to give warning to the workers. They should in case of alarm withdraw to the sap and after firing 5 rounds rapid... [they should] with the working party retreat as rapidly as possible to the fire [trench]. They should not on any account attempt to defend the sap from the sap itself. The enemy is sure to attack with superior numbers and such a defense would only cause useless loss of life and would prevent the garrison of the fire trench from taking defensive measures. In the fire trench at least two bombers should be stationed at the opening ready for immediate action as soon as the occupants of the sap have successfully withdrawn. Knowing the direction and range they should be able even in the dark to explode their grenades with deadly accuracy among the enemy in the sap... *The most important principle however to bear in mind is that the sap occupants should not make any attempt at defense but should retreat as rapidly as possible to the fire trench upon the first sign of attack.* [Emphasis added]²⁵⁶

Papineau's description of how to conduct oneself during a trench raid has a similar stratagem, the construction of a blocking position followed by the near immediate fighting withdrawal from it, while both flanks of the position are bombarded from a point slightly back. His description of how a raiding party should be composed is interesting in its delineation of men into groups of killers and killing facilitators:

1. Grenadiers: These men should carry as many bombs as possible. They should not have rifles but should be armed with revolvers and knives or knuckle dusters.
2. Bayonet men: Will carry

²⁵⁶ Papineau, "Part III Trench Fighting," 200-2.

rifles and fixed bayonets. In proportion to Grenadiers they should be 2 to 1 but at least one of the bayonet men should be instructed to replace the grenadier in case of necessity. The second bayonet men should carry slung over his shoulder a pack or other receptacle containing a small extra supply of bombs. 3. Sandbag Men: These men will have their rifles slung and will not fix bayonets until they are in the enemy trench and until it appears necessary to do so. Each man will carry 20 empty sandbags and every second man a spade. Two men will be [tasked] to carry a steel plate loophole.²⁵⁷

The idea was that, after the grenadiers burst their way into the trenches and the bayonet men killed any occupants still about, the sandbag men would go to work constructing a position to block their flanks.

The word “kill” was used advisedly in the previous sentence; Papineau has it that on no account should prisoners be taken during the initial assault: “*They must take no prisoners.* All the garrison must be killed or seriously wounded. Each bayonet man must have his exact duty detailed.”²⁵⁸ Here Papineau is discussing what Cook describes as the “politics of surrender,” and denoting a specific situation in which prisoners must be killed due to the tactical exigencies of the situation. Covered by the bayonet men and the grenadiers (who were to husband their bombs carefully), the two groups of two sandbag men would go to work creating two blocking positions, the first, when nearly complete would shelter the grenadiers and the bayonet men who would continue to defend until the completion of a second block some convenient distance away, which was to be occupied as soon as the first position was completed. This second position was to overlook the first with the steel loophole that had been brought along for the purpose. Once the Germans took the first position, the second would open up on it and be defended for some convenient time while the sandbag men would be hurriedly dismantling the parapet and moving the sandbags to face the other way. Then the hard part began, the withdrawal.²⁵⁹ The cover of darkness was deemed so important that Papineau believed it sometimes advisable to maintain possession of the trench block for a whole day rather than depart in daylight. Nevertheless, once the signal to return to the trenches had been given, the men ran: “[A]ll the men not stationed at the barricades will as quickly

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 212.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 215.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 212-22.

as possible and *each man for himself* leave the enemy trench and return to their own original positions. [Emphasis added]”²⁶⁰ The men manning the defenses were then to return one by one, with the officer being the last man out.

Throughout his work, Papineau attempts to grapple with the two most important elements in the successful promulgation of a trench fight, technology and efficiency. The officer’s job, at every level, was to maximize the efficiency of his men by providing them with the right kit and the right information, and communicate accurate information by whatever means possible to higher HQ. Throughout, the emphasis is on controlled fire applied in situations where one could cause more damage than the enemy could in retaliation. Describing the use of rifle grenade batteries in incidental combat, for example, Papineau says that “unless a sufficient supply exists the batteries should only be used defensively never offensively. There is no value in attempting more than we are prepared to accomplish.”²⁶¹ If one was going to go to bomb them, it behooved one to bomb them right, for there is no sense in getting their wind up for nothing.

This brings us to Papineau’s notes on defensive warfare, or rather defensive battle, when the enemy, almost inevitably behind a heavy and extended barrage (or gas, or flamethrowers, or all the above), had gone over the top to capture some portion of the friendly echeloned trenches. Again, the key to surviving this type of warfare was to be prepared for it, by massive construction projects designed to give every man of the garrison a place to withdraw to that was relatively secure from shellfire. All three lines of the trenches, fire, support and rear, were to be used to shelter men during the bombardment:

As soon as it appears that a preparatory bombardment has begun the officers commanding the trench will signal “Take posts for bombardment.” A bugle note would make an excellent signal. Otherwise the word is passed down the trench from man to man. Immediately the sentries already detailed will step into the positions especially prepared for them. That portion of the

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 223.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 165.

garrison which has been detailed to withdraw to the support trenches will do so. The remainder of the garrison will promptly retire to the artillery shelter trenches which have been constructed for the purpose. Every man will have had his exact position assigned to him. He will of course also know the exact place to which he will return in the fire trench upon the cessation of the bombardment and the advance if the enemy's infantry. Each man will take with him his rifle and equipment and 2 bandoliers of ammunition.²⁶²

It was in the immediate period following the bombardment that Bisley-style musketry was to be employed by the survivors (as at Frezenburg and Sanctuary Wood). Although, as Papineau knew first-hand, the Germans could wreak terrific destruction with high explosives, he also knew how difficult it was to kill or wound enough men to entirely incapacitate its garrison, especially at all points behind the front-line itself. Discussing the ultimate inability of the pre-assault bombardment to completely or effectively subdue the front-line, Papineau argues that:

In the first place it can only [have] a limited effect for, notwithstanding the enormous quality of artillery possessed by the enemy, it is impossible for them to concentrate a sufficient force against any real proportion of our exclusive fighting front. They may be able to destroy our first line for a length of over one to fifteen miles but this is so small a proportion of the total line that if the remainder continues to be firmly held and if the necessary counter offensive has been successfully prepared, it is extremely doubtful if any serious advance will be made in the area of attack. In the second place an Artillery Preparation serves as a warning of the impending assault and dispositions may be at once taken to check the advance. Moreover, the extent or completeness of the preparation will remain unknown to the attackers until the infantry assault is actually launched and it may then prove a most unpleasant discovery.²⁶³

Keep in mind that this was written months before the immense tragedy that was the defensive Battle of Sanctuary Wood/Mont Sorrel in June 1916, and the even greater tragedy of the first day of the Somme on July 1st of the same year. Indeed, the battles are something of an inverse of one another (although the scale and duration of Sanctuary Wood was much smaller). Both were evidence that neither belligerent had figured out the tactical problems of the offensive during the summer of 1916.

During defensive battle, when the enemy's assault had "lost its impetus" or when enough men had been killed or wounded that the survivors could not carry on, and while the exhausted troops

²⁶² Ibid., 236-7.

²⁶³ Ibid., 232-233.

attempted to consolidate their newly won positions, a counter-attack was to be launched as soon as possible (“the quicker the better”) from the support lines.²⁶⁴ This was to be done only if there was “a reasonable chance of success.”²⁶⁵ If an immediate counter-attack failed, troops were to be positioned for a deliberate counter-attack to take place in the weeks following the initial attack. This is exactly what happened in June 1916 when the 7th Brigade undertook both hasty and deliberate counterattacks (the former failing and the latter succeeding) to retake the lines won by the Germans during their assault. Frezenburg provided Papineau with the experience necessary to understand the defensive warfare of the Corps in 1916.

Papineau records the five major tactics employed by the Germans in launching an attack and provides notes on how to defend against them: “1. Surprise attack. 2. Attack after Artillery Preparation. 3. Attack after Gas Preparation. 4. Attack after Mine Explosion. 5. Attack after Liquid Fire.”²⁶⁶ During gas-attacks men must stand their ground; “all ranks must be made to realize that to withdraw from a gas attack is as cowardly as retreat before infantry and subject to the same penalties.”²⁶⁷ He lists several countermeasures that can be employed against gas attacks, including gas curtains and fires. He openly wonders whether “during the discharge of gas the hostile infantry attack could not be anticipated by a sortie under cover of the enemy gas from our own trenches.” This author is unaware of any examples of this taking place. Here, working his way through the primary methods by which by which the enemy supports an over-the-top attack, Papineau’s text ends, just before the proposed section on liquid fire. Perhaps contemplating the horrors of defensive tactics against men armed with flame throwers, weapons that burned humans to death with scientific efficiency were too much for Papineau. Or perhaps, having never experienced flame-throwers as they had not yet been invented during the

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 246.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Papineau, “Part III Trench Fighting,” 230.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 256.

defensive battle he experienced in 1915, he did not feel comfortable speaking about them. Or perhaps the professionalism he brought to the task of completing his notes stood too at odds with memories of craters that he had garrisoned, and gigantic graveyards where the earth swallowed men whole or in part. It appears that he never wrote his section on offensive warfare, which seems somewhat fitting considering he died during the first major offensive that he personally took part in, at Passchendaele.

During his extended leave, Papineau's treatise came to the attention of the Canadian Corps HQ staff, and the propaganda czar Sir Max Aitken. During the next phase of his military career, which lasted longer than his original duty with the PPCLI, eighteen months, he would work in propaganda and lessons learned, producing reports and records about the situation at the front. These reports were tactically and operationally relevant to the staff, and simultaneously useful in the effort to publicize the actions of the Canadians for propaganda purposes, most especially to encourage enlistment.²⁶⁸ Pursuing his ideas and helping to implement some of them to increase the fighting efficiency of the units of the corps, Papineau remained on the staff from February 1916 to June 1917. Thus, he could witness in relative safety the battles of three main fronts of corps activity during this period: Sanctuary Wood near Ypres, the Somme, and Vimy.

Papineau was soon swamped with work and, despite his comfortable establishment, he claimed never to have worked harder in his life.²⁶⁹ He was made *aide-de-camp* to General Byng, the Commander of the Canadian Corps. In a recent article, Delaney has indicated that staff work at the Corps level tended to follow the same general outline as a battalion relief of the trenches, but over a much larger time frame and scale. Preparing for the Battle of Hill 70, which Papineau took part in, involved an initial reconnaissance, followed by training and inspections, issuing orders, ensuring that the men were

²⁶⁸ On Aitken's propaganda see, Jeff Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), 29-38. Tim Cook, "Documenting War and Forging Reputations: Sir Max Aitken and the Canadian War Records Office in the First World War," *War in History* 10, no. 3 (2003), 278-82.

²⁶⁹ Papineau, quoted in Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 234.

equipped properly to meet the challenges of the battle, and then moving them into position for the assault itself. Each step along this “battle procedure” was overseen and facilitated by officers of the staff from the Brigade to the Army.²⁷⁰ He was “seconded” to the CWRO, but his job remained that of a General Staff Officer, unlike others who were attached to the establishment of the War Records Office.²⁷¹ As he wrote to Beatrice in October 1916,

you must understand that I am not a mere newspaper correspondent. Nothing makes me angrier. I write many official staff documents as well. For instance yesterday I made a complete tour of our whole battle front – interviewed almost all the Battalion commanders – personally examined the enemy lines and finally wrote a long report which the General favourably commented upon today.²⁷²

Staff officers had many jobs, including drafting orders, compiling intelligence on enemy formations and activities, ensuring that rations and ammunition moved to the places they were supposed to, keeping tabs on subordinate formations, observing the front-line, mapping and checking maps, keeping them up to date, training men for offensives, and promulgating and evolving tactical doctrine. Delaney quotes the Field Service Regulations outlining the responsibilities of staff officers: “An officer of the staff... has a twofold responsibility: first, he assists a commander in the supervision and control of the operations and requirements of the troops, he transmits his orders and instructions and arranges details connected therewith; secondly, it is his duty to give to the troops every assistance in his power in carrying out the instructions issued to them.”²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Delaney has it that “the first Canadian officers did not start their staff learner program until August 1917, but Papineau took a junior staff course at Hesdin in December 1916. Perhaps Delaney is focusing on the training of senior staff officers (GSO 1, 2) and not Junior staff officers like Papineau (GSO 3). “The Corps Nervous System in Action: Commanders, Staffs, and Battle Procedure,” in *Capturing Hill 70: Canada’s Forgotten Battle of the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 60, 53-63.

²⁷¹ Such as Lieutenant A.Y. Jackson, for example. See, Ryan Flavelle, “‘Not Enough Food and Too Many Military Police:’ Discipline, Food, and the 23rd Reserve Battalion July-Sept 1917,” *War and Society* 35, no. 2 (2016), 93-94. See also, A. Y. Jackson, *A Painter’s Country: The Autobiography of A.Y. Jackson* (Toronto: Clarke and Irwin, 1963), 45.

²⁷² Papineau quoted in, Cook, “Documenting War,” 280.

²⁷³ Delaney, “The Corps Nervous System,” 51.

Becoming a staff captain in February 1916 and a General Staff Officer 3rd Grade in November 1916, Papineau found himself viewing his regiment from afar. He witnessed its near-destruction in the Salient in June 1916. One of the more poignantly tragic documents here encountered are the maps of Sanctuary Wood/Mont Sorrel that were maintained by the corps for the month of June 1916. The maps show the actual changes to the lines throughout the month of June during what Papineau and others called a “titanic fight” to stave off the latest German attempt to break through the Ypres salient, or at least gain better tactical positions within it.²⁷⁴ The changes are minute, effectively negligible, even though the sacrifices entailed in making those changes were stupendous and horribly bloody. Clearly, the 7th Brigade and PPCLI had not solved the problem of the counterattack, and could only fight the enemy to a standstill on his chosen battle-space, trading hundreds of lives for a few hundred square yards of their former front-line.

We can also see some of the ideas in “Trench Warfare” being promulgated through the corps during the period that Papineau was on the staff. In incidental fighting, especially, Papineau’s ideas on how to entrap or kill enemy soldiers seem to have been attempted. Certain elements of it are reflected in the intelligence reports of the 7th Brigade. For example, one of the ways that Papineau argues enemy wire entanglements could be dealt with was to attach a stout cable to them and pull: “It has also been suggested that a species of grappling iron might be thrown over the wire and pulled in by a winch or other devise so dragging away the wire from in front of the enemy trench.”²⁷⁵ Papineau doubted the effectiveness of this method to presage an attack, but believed that it could be used to evoke a response, which is what happened to a patrol by an unidentified unit of the 7th Brigade: “Another patrol cut and disarranged the German wire near the north end of CLONMEL COPSE and then attached a rope to a 50 foot section of it. They returned to our lines and on a signal hauled the section of wire over to

²⁷⁴ “Canadian Corps General Staff War Diary,” June 1916, Appendix III/3, 27-37, RG9, Militia and Defence, Series III-D-3, Volume 4813, Reel T-7175, LAC. See also, “Map of Defence of Sanctuary Wood,” 1916, 37(7)-1.

²⁷⁵ “Canadian Corps Summary of Intelligence,” 18 July 1916, 1, 31(4)-4.

our trenches. The enemy became very excited and threw many flares, bombs and rifle grenades, which, however, did no damage.”²⁷⁶ It is impossible to say whether Papineau’s treatise or his work on the staff was directly related to this action, but it nevertheless followed his plan exactly.

The intelligence summaries also indicate that the PPCLI continued to be skilled raiders in the same mould as that which Papineau helped establish in February 1915. A summary of a PPCLI “minor raid” led by Lieutenants Burness and Renolds describes how the men of the regiment successfully took over a section of line and stole an enemy pump being used to send water towards the British lines:

Two periscopes which were being used by enemy for observation in direction of our patrol were forced down by direct hits from our snipers. After several bombs had been thrown into the enemy wire and post, our patrol removed the wire frames in front of the post... Patrol then entered the enemy trench at 9.20 a.m., destroyed two snipers’ posts by removing the plates, threw 18 cylindrical stick bombs out, and took the pump after unscrewing the hose, which, unfortunately, was too cumbersome to bring over. The Patrol then returned with the pump to Durand Crater Post at 9.30 AM.²⁷⁷

Note that the raid’s time on target was miniscule, only ten minutes in the German trench, but that their effect on target was significant; they fulfilled their mission to kill, injure and demoralize the troops of the enemy garrison.²⁷⁸

An active and intelligent imagination was an important ally in devising strategies to do so.

Papineau realized that the strength of the Corps lay not only in the bodies of his men, but in utilizing their intelligence to maximize the killing efficiency of their unit: “We have in our armies[’] citizens of

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.

²⁷⁷ “Canadian Corps Summary of Intelligence,” “3rd Canadian Division Summary of Intelligence,” 5 Dec 1916, 1.

²⁷⁸ On the evolution of Canadian raiding doctrine see, Garnett, “Butcher and Bolt,” 18-146. On the general ambivalence of most men, see Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 70-5. On the existence at the staff level and below of “thrusters” and hard chargers see, Desmond Morton, “The Canadian Military Experience in the First World War, 1914-18,” in *The Great War, 1914-18: Essays on the Military, Political and Social History of the First World War*, ed. R.J.Q. Adams (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1990), 82-7. See also, John Ellis, *Eye-Deep in Hell: The Western Front, 1914-1918* (London: Hopkins, (1976) 1989), 72-80. Saunders notes that the effectiveness of raids is hard to quantify, but wholly negative. “Although many of the early raids were ad hoc affairs, and while the fighting was often brutally close-quarters, no trench raid was ever mean merely to harry the enemy. Indeed, the purpose of raiding was more complex so that the arguments for and against its value to the conduct of the war are not easy to resolve... there were plenty of failures on both sides, some of them quite spectacular... [but it had] a wider strategic value.” Anthony Saunders, *Raiding on the Western Front* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2012), 3.

every profession and their minds as well as their bodies should be directed to the solution of this tremendous problem of modern warfare. It will not be solved by time worn manuals nor by minds cast into the strict military moulds of former schools.”²⁷⁹ Over and again, the goal was to kill the enemy, and to generally make his life more difficult and unpleasant, and minds creative in the military arts of killing were highly sought after.

Working for Aitken and the War Records Office meant visiting and recording the battlefields, and publishing accounts of the fighting. Describing the deliberate counterattack launched on June 12th (as opposed to the immediate counterattack launched in the early morning of June 3rd after the initial German advance had been checked) at Mount Sorrel, Papineau describes the assault in romantic terms: “The weather throughout the attack was of the vilest description, the rain coming down in torrents; but it was not, as subsequent events will show, altogether unfavourable to the *successful prosecution of the adventure*. [Emphasis added]”²⁸⁰ The adventure might have seemed a little less adventurous to the men actually tasked with the fighting, or maybe more so. As a propagandist, Papineau was most notable for his ability to speak truths about the war, and still make it sound appealing enough to young men (and women) that they should want to partake in the adventure in some capacity. For Papineau, the counterattack at Mount Sorrel was successful due to the dash of the men of the infantry and the heavy weight of shells which had been brought to bear upon 10,000 yards of enemy trenches, those trenches that the Canadians had held a few weeks earlier.

With a Daimler limousine, a chauffeur, and a chateau behind the lines, Papineau undertook to write about the situation at the front for the Corps commander, staff, and CWRO. Hodder-Williams, for example, quotes from Captain H.R.H. Prince Arthur of Connaught and Captain T.M. Papineau, MC report on the assault on Vimy Ridge:

²⁷⁹ Talbot Papineau, “A Lull in the Storm. The Fight for Hooze,” in *Canada in Flanders: The Official Story of the Canadian Expeditionary Force*, ed., Lord Beaverbrook, 3 vols. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917), 2:186.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 230.

The difficulties of the first ground to be traversed were peculiarly great. The protracted mining activity of both sides in this locality had resulted in a chain of great mine craters, many of them impassable, and the others presenting a difficult obstacle for infantry. In addition the unfavourable weather of the preceding days and the continuous shelling had reduced much of the earth to vast puddles of sticky mud. The deep shell craters, the maze of shattered trenches and the remnants of torn and scattered entanglements added further obstructions to the heavy-laden infantry.²⁸¹

In this passage, we are granted an insight into the difficulties under which the infantryman laboured.

Although Prince Arthur of Connaught, the Governor-General's son, got first author status on the report, the fact that Papineau's name appears in connection with that of Queen Victoria's great-grandson is evidence that, at the very least, he might have stayed on the staff for the remainder of the war.

Despite his comfortable environs, Papineau missed the fellowship between a company commander, his men and his regiment, and found himself in an untenable spiritual/psychological position: "By what strange law do I still live?" The question galled. On one instance, he was treated with open derision by his erstwhile friend Major Agar Adamson (who did not appreciate having a camera shoved in his face before that had become a thing):

Papineau turned up two days ago with a cinematographic camera and wanted us to pose for him. I suggested he took photographs of the graves of the fallen and ordered him to get out of the lines as I did not think it fitting that the present critical situation officers should be going about with a Punch and Judy Show... I only hope the camera gets smashed. If Papineau returned to the Regiment and did his bit, it would be more to his credit than playing into Max Aitken's hands and driving about in motor cars and sleeping in a comfortable bed 16 miles behind the support lines.²⁸²

Adamson no longer saw Papineau as a "real man." The war had made him into a caricature of himself.

Turned away at the door of HQ by Adamson, Papineau felt the weight of disconnection from that

²⁸¹ Hodder-Williams, *PPCLI*, 2 vols., 1:215.

²⁸² Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 8 Aug 1916, 205. A Punch and Judy show was a puppet show begun in England in May 1662, which, to modern sensibilities, seems frankly inappropriate, but did not appear to be seen as such by audiences of its many iterations in England. Charles Dickens enjoyed them, as did Queen Victoria: "Punch is such a droll, diverting vagabond, that even those who have witnessed his crimes are irresistibly seduced into laughter by his grotesque antics and his cynical bursts of merriment, which render him such a strange combination of the demon and the buffoon." Thomas Frost, "The Old Showmen," 1881, quoted in "That's the Way to do it! A History of Punch and Judy." *Victoria and Albert Museum*, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/thats-the-way-to-do-it-a-history-of-punch-and-judy/> (25 Aug 2017). See also, Robert Leach, *The Punch & Judy show: History, Tradition, and Meaning* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1985).

institution that had been his home, often a happy one, for nearly two years. That same summer, unable to justify his continued existence outside the regiment, he returned to it and died.

In writing of his reasons for wanting to return, Papineau mixes the pragmatic and the ethereal: a chance at a majority (and perhaps the position of second-in-command of the regiment), and the hope of regaining that part of himself that had died in the trenches, the part that believed in honour and nobility and doing your bit:

I decided after mature deliberation to ask to be allowed to return to the regiment. The regiment wanted me and it meant promotion. So tomorrow I have to be back in the line actually in the trenches – a major. And possibly 2nd in command of the regiment. So write and wish me good luck. I am really glad to go back for many reasons. Nobody thought I was doing any work on the staff although I never worked harder in my life. Also I think I am called upon to make this increased sacrifice. Maybe foolish of me but that is the way I feel.²⁸³

Papineau simply did not feel comfortable in his skin outside of the regiment. He knew that he had a somewhat bomb-proof job that he could hold down by being good at it (like Draycot, McLaren and, to a lesser extent, Christie). Even after he returned to the regiment, Stevens has it that he was “pressed on more than one occasion to return to the staff.”²⁸⁴ He also knew that his regiment – his loyalty to which went back further than Aitken, or the Canadian Corps itself – needed good officers and that he could make a difference. Finally, he had a loyalty to the men of his company (amongst any good officer’s first loves).

Like most, perhaps all,²⁸⁵ of those here studied, the war ultimately broke Papineau’s spirit – by degrees – until he had nothing left but his duty and his honour, which sounds ridiculous, but was true. It was these that allowed him to happily return to his regiment in the summer of 1917. Having seen the

²⁸³ Papineau to Buller, 5 Jun 1917.

²⁸⁴ G.R. Stevens quoted in, Zubkowski, *Faith and Freedom*, 289.

²⁸⁵ Except for Jack McLaren who seems to have managed to keep his sense of humour through it all, and asked for his favourite ice cream before dying at a ripe old age surrounded by his loving family. J.W. McLaren, *JW: The life story of John Wilson McLaren 1895-1988*, ed., John D. McLaren (Toronto: McLaren Press Graphics Limited, c. 2006), 109.

writing on the wall with the staff of the Corps HQ, the officer knew the hell that his regiment would soon face at Passchendaele, and the desperate need for qualified officers on the ground. He was also aware of the desperately low morale of the troops who had slogged through the Third Battle of Ypres, which – by the time the PPCLI arrived – had already extended across three bloody months. As G.R. Stevens records,

While we were moving up, we walked across the Cassel one evening and there we met the Australian and North British troops that were coming out. Their bitterness surpassed anything we could have imagined; one felt that they were on the verge of mutiny, which they were not. But that night, I learned for the first time, (Talbot probably knew already) that the French armies had been in mutiny for months and that the British Commonwealth were carrying virtually the entire burden of the war.²⁸⁶

By Passchendaele the PPCLI was on its fourth commanding officer, Colonel “Ack Ack” Adamson himself. Colonel Farquhar had been shot at St. Eloi, Colonel Buller was killed leading the immediate counterattack at Sanctuary Wood, and Colonel R.T. Pelly was ping-ponging between commands before being transferred to England to supervise the school for commanding officers at Aldershot on the day before Passchendaele began (Col. Gault was seriously wounded twice during the two major defensive battles in the Ypres salient of 1915 and 1916 and rendered incapable of command).²⁸⁷

Officer casualties had been high since the beginning, when Papineau had stuck it while others fled, and miraculously survived when seemingly everyone else lay dead or wounded around him. Captain Newton, an *aide-de-camp* to the Governor-General the Duke of Connaught, was killed within two weeks of entering the trenches. The Germans, at that time, had a demonstrable advantage in shells. As S.L. Jones wrote to his wife,

²⁸⁶ Stevens quoted in, Zubkowski, *Faith and Freedom*, 244.

²⁸⁷ The wounding and death of battalion commanders continued into 1918, and the crisis in leadership at the battalion level reached a head with the death of acting Lieutenant-Colonel Charlie Stewart who had retained his leadership of the battalion despite Gault’s being promised it. The hard living “gallant fighting company commander” Stewart had the backing of the company commanders over the one-legged and aged Gault. See, McCulloch, “Crisis in Leadership,” 384-90, 396-7. See also, Williams, *First in the Field*, 134-8.

When the morning came our big guns opened up and raked their trenches from side to side, ranging perfectly. We enjoyed the experience for a few minutes, when the German guns suddenly opened on us, and for the rest of the day seventeen different kinds of hell were all about us. Guns of every size and kind roared and spit back and forth... This bombardment went on for two days and we only lost Captain Newton and two men killed and seven wounded.²⁸⁸

It was here that Papineau learned that it was better not to start a fight you could not win.²⁸⁹

Officer casualties were caused by other factors, cowardice included. Before a month in the trenches had passed, the original OC of No. 3 Company and Papineau's first officer commanding, Major McKinery, had become a "casualty." As Francis Farquhar wrote in that first month, "Poor old Newt was shot in the stomach and passed away without pain the next day... Smith, McKinery and Cornish are in hospital and several others are seedy."²⁹⁰ Hugh Niven remembered that he could tell these officers would not be able to "stick it" and provide useful service to the regiment, even before the regiment left for England, identifying three men to the CO whom he did not think would be able to do the job: "In France, Colonel Farquhar took me into his room about a week after the last one was struck off strength and said 'Niven how did you know those three officers were bad[?]' I said ['I don't know, they talked too grand and pretended too much.['']"²⁹¹ Casualties amongst those who were found suitable remained high, in fact the suitability to remain with the regiment tended to increase one's odds of becoming a casualty immeasurably.²⁹² The fact was that Papineau was not one of the "seedy" ones and had proven

²⁸⁸ S.L. Jones, "Two Years with the Princess Patricia's 1914-1916 being The Letters of Major Stanley L. Jones, K.C.," ed., Lucille Ross Jones, 51, 16(1.1-1.5)-4.

²⁸⁹ Papineau makes direct reference to Newton's death in his treatise. "We once fired 4 grenades 'for fun' at night and the enemy replied with a very active rifle fire so that one of our best officers was killed a few moments later as he was leaving the trench." Papineau, "Part III Trench Fighting," 160.

²⁹⁰ Farquhar quoted in, Zubkowski, *Faith and Freedom*, 53.

²⁹¹ Niven to Cameron Ware, 9 Aug 1963, 31(53.2)-9.

²⁹² This fact was not limited to subalterns, as Brennan points out, and included even battalion commanders. "Just over one quarter were wounded at least once while so serving, and of these 45 officers, 21 were wounded seriously enough to be removed from their commands for at least a month, and 14 were never able to resume command. 'Stress' permanently removed five battalion commanders, while physical breakdown not the result of being wounded—and often accompanied by stress—permanently removed thirteen more. A further twenty-two—one in eight—were killed in action or subsequently died of their wounds. It would seem that battalion commanders—if they were going to command effectively—had to place themselves in harm's way... It only slightly exaggerates the case to say they were used up almost as rapidly as their men." Patrick H. Brennan, "Good Men for

his ability to stick it, but found that, after escaping the trenches, he could not reconcile himself with the man who survived.

Papineau knew that the only way for him to remain true to himself was to return to the regiment. But he had also been taught something of that societal malaise and disenchantment that would ultimately destroy the old ordered structured world of right and wrong. G.R. Stevens recalled the exact book with which Papineau returned to the regiment: "When Talbot Papineau came back to the regiment before Passchendaele, he brought a copy of *Sonia: Between Two Worlds* by Steven [sic] McKenna with him. It was the first of the disillusionist war books and it affected both of us deeply."²⁹³ Published in 1917, the book rhapsodizes about group psychology and violence in a troubling way as the civilian McKenna sought to understand how the world around him had gone mad, explaining and deploring the reality of mass violence that seemed inescapable at that historical moment. The novel's protagonist, David O'Rane, "had learned three lessons in collective psychology: a sense of humour is a strong ally; fifty sheep follow when one has butted a gap in a hedge; and the basis of democracy is that all men are entitled to see that their neighbours suffer equally with themselves."²⁹⁴ In recalling this book, Stevens is likely drawing a parallel between O'Rane's character and that of Papineau himself. The two are similar, both gifted scholars, scions of wealthy and storied families that had been on the wrong side of a failed revolution, and they were both natural leaders of men (because they cared about them and never asked them to go anywhere they would not lead).

a Hard Job: Canadian Infantry Battalion Commanders on the Western Front," *The Canadian Army Journal* 9, 1 (2006): 12-13.

²⁹³ Stevens quoted in, Zubkowski, *Faith and Freedom*, 244.

²⁹⁴ McKenna, *Sonia*, 53.

It is a little-known fact that the sitting Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, played Talbot Papineau in an engaging, if low-budget and often painfully inaccurate, CBC television series.²⁹⁵ In this role, Trudeau is literally donning the political mantle associated with Papineau's name by pretending to be him, wearing his uniform, and speaking his lines. The scene quotes a letter Papineau wrote to his pen-paramour Beatrice Fox. Amongst Trudeau's scenes is one that portrays the then not prime-minister bathing and despairing of his infidelities while his soothing voice mentally composes his letter confessing his infidelities to Fox. This is an example of how edited, mediated memory of the dead continues to play a role in shaping political discourse and public remembrance. After thus pouring out his heart and purifying his body, he rises from his bath and puts on the very becoming uniform of an officer of the PPCLI (complete with contemporarily inaccurate red tabs and major's rank).²⁹⁶ The show also features Papineau flashing back to the Battle of Frezenburg, firing his pistol at the onrushing enemy, thereby linking the two themes that predominate in our understanding of Papineau as the "Happy Warrior:" Papineau the conflicted killer, and Papineau the romantic lover.²⁹⁷

Martyrdom, and the ensuing conscious or unconscious editing of the stories of the dead allow us to conceptualize Papineau as a type of happy warrior, pleased in the company of men he respected whose profession was killing. Although, as we have seen, he was fundamentally conflicted about the act of killing itself, he was also clearly happy in the company of the men of the regiment. That he is silent on the facts of offensive warfare is telling. He wrote only of defensive and incidental battle because these were the phases that he had personally experienced by early 1916. He could not answer the

²⁹⁵ The CBC page only has the shortened version of the *Doczone* presentation of the story which does not include the bathing scene. CBC, "Canada and the Great War - Episode 2 - Part 3." *Youtube* (uploaded by Canmildoc), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2dV5tQJSew> (5 Aug 2017). See also, Keelan, "The Forgotten Few," 247-50.

²⁹⁶ The fact that Trudeau succeeded in becoming Prime Minister, whereas Papineau died to assuage his honour, is an interesting piece of stagecraft on Trudeau's part. Papineau could have been the next Prime Minister and many thought him the natural successor to Laurier and a possible future leader of the Liberal Party. Justin Trudeau is not Talbot Papineau, but he did play him on TV.

²⁹⁷ As Keelan points out, Papineau's memory had all but been extinguished in print until the 1970's. Keelan, "The Forgotten Few," 249. He dates Papineau's national renaissance to 1977 and Heather Robertson's *A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1977).

question of how to conduct the offensive authentically until he himself had participated in it. Papineau, the patriotic dreamer, survives the war in popular memory because the happy warrior, or at least the resigned warrior, dies leading his men to grips with the enemy on prepared ground. Adamson records that his body was only recognizable due to the unique way in which he wore his puttees.²⁹⁸ It is extremely unlikely that Papineau loosed a shot at Passchendaele before he was killed, but his death was a necessity to ensure his men moved forward into the hail of fire.

²⁹⁸ "A pair of feet with reversed putties [sic] was seen sticking out of a shell hole full of water. Stewart said Major Papineau always wore his putties [sic] that way, they pulled the body out and by examining the contents of the pockets, found it to be Papineau. He had been hit by part of a shell in the stomach blowing everything else above away, poor fellow. He could not have known what hit him." Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 20 Nov 1917, 315.

Chapter 4: The Legend of Jack Munroe – The Gentle-Giant Axe Wielding Killer

The first soldier in a Canadian regiment to set foot on French soil during the First World War was the former heavy-weight boxer and prospector Jack Munroe who joined the PPCLI shortly after the war broke out in August 1914.²⁹⁹ His story, which is a mixture of truth, legend, untruth and unknowns, grants us a glimpse into the story of his regiment and his country at war as presented to and by Canadians. That first step onto French soil was the culmination of the legend that had preceded war, and the beginning of a new chapter in that legend. It was simultaneously something unprecedented and something that followed in a long line of tradition.

Like the regiment joined, Munroe had shown an innate ability to appear as if he was from wherever he was (from a publicity standpoint) and was claimed by hometowns in Canada and America while a boxer. Moreover, his character and achievements led to the growth of a substantial prewar legend, on which he attempted to capitalize both as a writer and a recruiter. His war memoir presents the war in starkly polar terms as a fight between good and evil. Presented through the eyes of his dog, Bobbie Burns, who likely accompanied him at least as far as England, as a fight between “lowbrows” of the canine tribe, and the honourable pure blood of a collie, defending himself when set upon without provocation, “I had wondered what war was. Now I knew. It had been war when I had been at the throat of the mongrel who had so wickedly assaulted me when I had not harmed him.”³⁰⁰ Despite his bombast, Munroe’s story proves the difficulty that men had in killing the enemy and the moral injury it wrought upon them. Shortly after Frezenburg, he transferred into the stretcher-bearers before being invalided home due to a sniper’s bullet. When we peer behind the curtain of Munroe’s hyperbole, we

²⁹⁹ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 92. Munroe records that the first Canadian off the *Cardiganshire*, the ship which carried the *Patricia’s* from Southampton in England to Havre in France (its official number was 132045), was then Adjutant Captain Buller, who went on to command the regiment and was killed at Sanctuary Wood/Mont Sorrel, but that Munroe was the second man, and first enlisted man off the boat.

³⁰⁰ Jack told Bobbie to let the mongrel go instead of killing him, even though his jaws were around the latter’s throat and he had begun to worry him to death. *Ibid.*, 51-56.

find an elaborate justification for the killing acts that Munroe and the regiment undertook, and a text where fiction was merged with (often unverifiable) truths that are seldom discussed in histories of the war.

In the epithetic epigraph to Munroe's monograph, *Mopping Up*, a piece of doggerel by J.E. Middleton describes how Munroe made the decision to go to war, and how many Canadians in 1914 spoke about that same decision. Munroe had been a true Canadian with "arm of iron and fist of brass" staking claims in Northern Ontario where "the rocks... bloom into cobalt rose" when he learned of the war "by the veriest chance." The peace of the "The glittering years! How swift they pass!" had been shattered in Munroe by the news from far off Europe: "'A war?' he said with questing eye. / Is England in it?' They answered, 'Yes.' / Then Jack Munroe raised his head on high / And answered: 'It's up to me, I guess.' / I have a sister. She gets my coin. / Make out my will. I'm a-goin' to join.'"³⁰¹ James McRae, a contemporary prospector and friend of Jack Munroe in Northern Ontario, records it differently. He was a fellow prospector who travelled many of the same routes as Munroe but did not enlist during the war, remaining in Cobalt as the editor of the *Nugget*. He remembers meeting Munroe shortly after the outbreak of war was announced in Canada: "'I hate the very thought of war' Jack Munro said to me... 'I guess it is up to those of us who are single,' I said... 'For the life of me' Jack said meditatively, 'I can't quite make up my mind what's best.'" ³⁰² McRae then has it that Munroe boarded a train to the town of Swastika from thence to return to his mining claims, a version of events that stands starkly at odds with what Munroe later wrote. However, even if Munroe did seek the solitude of his claims and cabin, by the

³⁰¹ J.E. Middleton, "The Ballad of Jack Munroe," in *Sea Dogs and Men at Arms: A Canadian Book of Songs* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild, & Stewart, 1918), 6. Also quoted in epigraph to *Mopping Up*.

³⁰² James A. McRae, *Call Me Tomorrow* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1960), 191. Vance finds that men enlisted for many, many reasons with the two extremes being "economic reasons and patriotism." He writes of one Billy Throop, "who's decision to enlist in 1914 was almost reflexive: 'There was nothing deep or intricate in Billy's reasoning. Sentiment governed his actions as often as logic, and 'how?' or 'why?' rarely detained him. The main idea was all he cared about. Details he ignored or trod under foot.'" Jonathan Vance, "Understanding the Motivation to Enlist," in *Bearing Witness: Perspectives on War and Peace from the Arts and Humanities*, eds., Sherrill Grace, Patrick Imbert, and Tiffany Johnstone (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 32.

24th of August 1914 (twenty days after Britain declared war), he had attested his willingness to serve in the newly founded regiment.

Munroe's version of events, narrated throughout by Bobbie Burns, presents the war as the shattering of an idyll of peace, such as is often described in veterans' memoirs (and wider contemporary novels and memoirs³⁰³): "The day was beautiful, a rare day seen only in late summer and in Northern Ontario. The sky was a deep blue sea of peace across which white dream ships were sailing. The dipping paddles cut rippling waters as brown as the dun mantle of late autumn. Out from the wooded shore crept ragged, straggling, sinister shadows."³⁰⁴ He introduces two other characters, Rob and Fred, his closest companions at the front, and he emphasised the duty that he personally felt as a (White-Anglo) Canadian citizen of the British Empire. Devouring the newspapers that Rob brought breathlessly back with him, the trio let their bacon, bread and tea burn, much to Bobbie's chagrin:

They finished reading together and stared at one another... "Boys," said [Munroe] "it seems to be up to us, 'soldiers three.' What?" For a moment they talked with one another only with their eyes. But because I know the speech of men's eyes, I knew that they all felt alike about this thing, whatever it was; this thing that I could feel ripping and tearing at the peace of the forest. Then, with a common impulse, they reached out their hands to one another... and said together,

³⁰³ For example, Montgomery explores the war through Anne of Green Gables' (or Mrs. Dr. Blyth's) daughter Rilla's experience of it. She confronts the flood of war, in the news breaking at her first "grown up" party early in the novel and loses friends and brothers to that flood. L.M. Montgomery, *Rilla of Ingleside* (Toronto: Seal Books, (1920) 1982), 16-51. Neiberg points out that Canadians generally and L.M. Montgomery specifically were not alone in presenting the outbreak of war as a complete surprise akin to a natural disaster. He points out that many in Europe, even those of the upper-class who could see the war clouds rolling in, did not see it as anything that would affect *them*: "neither believed that a war, and certainly not a prolonged war, would needlessly disrupt their lives or cause them to do anything more drastic than keep a bit more cash and coal on hand. In the manner of an approaching natural disaster like a flood or a storm." Michael S. Neiberg, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 13. See also, Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London: The Bodley Head, 1965). On the effect of the war on British society see, Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Theweleit notes that the metaphor is suitably broad so as to encompass many meanings and that each involves a transgression of a hitherto unbreakable taboo: "The flood is abstract enough to allow processes of extreme diversity to be subsumed under its image. All they need have in common is some transgression of boundaries. Whether the boundaries belong to a country, a body, decency or tradition, their transgression must unearth something that has been forbidden." Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 232-3.

³⁰⁴ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 22.

as if one voice was speaking: “We’re on!” I was to learn that in that moment one voice *had* spoken. It was the voice of Canada. [Italics in original]³⁰⁵

In describing his response to the outbreak of war, Munroe falls into an important trope that came to describe how people reacted to the outbreak of war; it might be called the “myth of 1914” in Canada.³⁰⁶ Although the three had felt it a personal necessity to join in the big fight, they nevertheless understood something of the gravity of their decision, and their Empire’s decision to go to war. It was a “Still and grim” Munroe who went about the business of settling his affairs in Cobalt, writing his will, packing his cabin, and preparing to leave and perhaps not return.³⁰⁷ The men who joined had some understanding of the gravity of the situation they were facing, even if a gratuitous facetiousness could creep into their accounts.

The legend of Jack Munroe was already well established by the time that news of the war arrived in Northern Ontario. A former heavyweight boxer, Munroe had had a shot at the title, against Jim Jeffries on August 26th, 1904, which went only two rounds. Farmiloe believes that Jeffries harboured an intense hatred of Munroe stemming from their exhibition bout in Butte several years earlier, when Munroe had defeated the reigning world champ by decision in six rounds. By the time that Munroe got his chance at the title, Jeffries had let the enmity and vitriol stew for years, exploding out of his corner with a look of “pure hatred,” and pummeling Munroe mercilessly during the first round which the “terrible miner” escaped as a mass of bruises and cuts:

At the sound of the bell, he flew out of his corner and let go with the hardest blow he had ever aimed in his life. He missed – but he had swung with such force that he threw himself entirely off his feet and went sprawling on his hands and knees. His next blow landed and the rest is history. He pounded Munroe with such murderous intent that at the end of the first round

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 28.

³⁰⁶ See for example, Rutherford, “Canada’s August Festival,” 233-237. For an important discussion of how this myth informed German propaganda until well into the Second World War (and beyond) see, Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 58-97.

³⁰⁷ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 28.

those at ring-side were calling, “Stop it, he’ll kill him.” Munroe’s courage was never in question but he was powerless against the superhuman rage Jeffries had been nursing for two years.³⁰⁸

The second round took only forty-five seconds to complete before Munroe was laid out on the mat. He was simply no match for the champion on that day in San Francisco. As Farmiloe describes it, “When Munroe saw the hatred blazing in Jeffries’ eyes, it shook him. He had never hated anyone, nor had he ever done anything to deserve any man’s hatred, and Jeffries’ unjust anger directed at him was unnerving.”³⁰⁹ As we will see, this relationship with hatred would become an important element in Munroe’s war experience, memoir, and conceptualization of the enemy.

In her description of the fight, Farmiloe paints Munroe as a gentle giant, afraid of hurting his sparring partners. Jeffries had been training by punching massive bags filled with earth after destroying too many of the regular heavy bags, and his sparring partners were consistently knocked cold whereas Munroe had begun to take it easy on those with whom he trained.³¹⁰ The result, despite Munroe’s being, in the words of the contemporaneous light-heavyweight Kidd McCoy, “one of the gamest men that ever stepped into ring,” seems to have been inevitable.³¹¹ There could have ended the legend of Jack Munroe, beaten and bloodied by the superior Jeffries, but Munroe had too much of an ability to remain liked and usefully employed under any circumstances.

The complexities of the legend of Jack Munroe, and the difficulties one faces in separating fact from fiction, are illustrated by the story of his bout with Jeffries as it was told in a bar in Cape Breton near Munroe’s hometown of Boularderie, Nova Scotia. Hughie Johnston, the proprietor of a barroom in North Sydney, arranged for a telegraphic play-by-play of the fight to be read out live (by the standards of the time) to his barroom customers. When the second-round telegram arrived, a “hockey player named Cummings, first name not given” began to read it out, exchanged a glance with Johnston and decided to

³⁰⁸ Farmiloe, *Legend of Jack Munroe*, 72.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 67-69.

³¹¹ *Ibid.* 70-72.

substitute the text of the telegram with “Jeffries nearly knocked out by Munroe.”³¹² The pair continued to read out fabricated telegrams describing a fight which went 100 rounds and lasted until the sun came up. The truth of Munroe’s defeat would have been far less palatable than the invention, and sold far less beer. In a similar fashion, the legends that he describes surrounding the death of his comrades at the front and the necessity to take as many enemy lives as practicable were, in some instances, demonstrable falsehoods designed to play to the hometown crowd to whom he was writing. Munroe was remarkably capable of making himself appear to be from wherever he was, be it the Midwestern United States, Eastern Canada, or Northern Ontario. He thus perfectly exemplifies the similar way in which the legend of Patricia’s regiment would endear itself to the “hometowns” of Canadians across the country, and even south of was then known as the “medicine line” (on the prairies).

Munroe was also a natural leader and showed, due to his work ethic, a principled code of conduct and gentle character, successful at everything he turned his hands to (including – amongst other pastimes – mining, prospecting, football, boxing, and soldiering). A major wildfire at Porcupine Lake saw Munroe draw his pistols to ensure that women and children were loaded onto the ferry first, while flames began to engulf the shanty-town, and many died in the fire. Farmiloe quotes an account which makes the macabre of the tragedy vivid: “Forsyth’s run down to the lake amid catapulted balls of fire was a nightmare... his khaki shirt was burned off his back... around him were strewn the scorched bodies of his friends who died on their hands and knees, roasted alive.”³¹³ It was in this setting that Munroe stood, with his Mauser drawn, ensuring that the nobleman’s code of “women and children first” was honoured by the panicking miners gathered around the ferry: “‘Easy there!’ a bellowing voice

³¹² Paul MacDougall, “Jack Munroe and the 100-round fight of the century,” *Cape Breton Post*, 6 Jan 2012. <http://www.capebretonpost.com/news/local/2012/1/6/jack-munroe-and-the-100-round-fight-of-t-2856969.html> (6 Aug 2017). See also, William McDonald, “Leaves from a Cape Breton Gardener,” 1-4, MG 12.88 A.3M2C, *Beaton Institute Archives*, Cape Breton University.

³¹³ Farmiloe, *Legend of Jack Munroe*, 116.

cautioned. 'Stay where you are until every last woman and kid has been taken away.'"³¹⁴ Both McRae and Munroe survived the fire at Porcupine Lake, and McRae makes an interesting observation on how men mentally survived it, an observation that is equally applicable to some of Munroe's descriptions of surviving the fighting on the Western Front: men are liable to sing and be happy in the immediate aftermath of a catastrophe, but with a burden on their hearts that does not soon fade: "Boys... we are the lucky ones! And if we sing and attempt to be merry, it is not because we have forgotten the others who failed. May I suggest that we join in this toast to them: To all our friends who tried and lost, to them we raise our glasses—glasses that are flavoured with sadness."³¹⁵ As we will see over and over again, this sentiment was widely applicable to those who survived where friends had fallen during the war.

Everything that Munroe says directly about the war is presented through the eyes and inner voice of the collie Bobbie Burns.³¹⁶ The collie serves as a sort of narrative interlocutor between the trauma that Munroe experienced at war, and the prideful identity that had almost been taken away from him on the fields of France. The dog allows Jack to position himself as a reporter of events, stepping away from his body and his agency in the killing. Having lost the use of the arm that once knocked down the great Jim Jeffries and walloped Jack Johnson (who nevertheless won the fight),³¹⁷

³¹⁴ McRae, *Call me Tomorrow*, 122.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

³¹⁶ Munroe, in his forward to Burns' assumption of the role as narrator, states that he is no ordinary Collie. He once travelled through the barren land for ten days alone to reunite himself with Munroe, despite not having ever been to the place that Munroe was staying. He had also shown up to the train station at exactly the appropriate hour to greet Munroe upon his return from New York, even though the train had been an hour-and-a-half late. "Sometimes I wonder if bright-dogs do not pity us men for our mental limitations!" Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 16. Bobbie Burns was Munroe's most famous four-legged friend, but not the first. Farmiloe tells of the story of Jack's collection of "strange animals," including an alligator and a bear cub. The latter (and perhaps the former) he used to wrestle with while training for the heavy-weight championship in the 1903. When the devoutly Protestant Munroe returned from church to find his bear cub missing, he "organized a search party and went tramping through the woods in his Sunday best until he found his pet and brought it safely back to camp." It was the bear's welfare that he had been concerned with. Farmiloe, *Legend of Jack Munroe*, 68-69. For a fascinating article on the agency of dogs and soldiers during the First World War see, Chris Pearson, "Dogs, History and Agency," *History and Theory* 52, no. 4 (2013): 133-5, 139-45.

³¹⁷ The African-American heavy-weight whose punch was so famous that it was used as a nickname for the prodigiously deadly 15cm German shell. Johnson, the 6'1 200 lb son of slaves, was nicknamed "Lil Artha." The

Munroe had difficulty navigating the memories of his experiences of the “great adventure.”³¹⁸ The word that he most consistently uses for hitting a German with a rifle bullet is “winged,” perhaps a reference to the fact that he himself lost the use of a “wing” due to a sniper bullet severing the nerve. Bobbie Burns was one of ways in which Munroe began to accept and externalize the reality that he was maimed, in body and spirit. Bobbie’s narration affords Munroe the psychic space he needed to talk about the traumas of the war while it was still ongoing.³¹⁹

shell was nicknamed after Johnson because it produced black smoke (and a terrible wallop). Munroe fought him on 26 Jun 1905 and lost, but stayed on his feet throughout. Ibid., 77, 222.

³¹⁸ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 12. Roper calls the process of “remembering” or editing wartime anecdote as “a process motivated by the psychic needs of the past and present.” He describes a dialogue between the experiences “underpinning” the narrative “overlayed” with public representations of the soldier: “Narratives of the soldier hero draw on dominant cultural forms, but the choice of those forms can tell us something about individual subjectivity. The ‘underlay’ of memory, we might say, is structured through the nature of war experience itself... the vicissitudes of life in the here-and-now narration. The remembering of war thus needs to be seen as a psychically-orientated process, and one which operates forward from the event as well as backwards through the impact of public representations.” Michael Roper, “Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War,” *History Workshop Journal* 2000, no. 50 (2000), 184. See also, David Taylor, *Memory, Narrative and the Great War: Rifleman Patrick MacGill and the Construction of Wartime Experience* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 46-68.

³¹⁹ Bobbie’s narration can be seen as an example of a dissociative narration. A dissociative state is psychologically and biologically associated with freezing due to overwhelming danger where “the initial trauma... [shatters] the personality in such a way as to obviate the possibility of effective agentic action.” From a brain mechanical point of view this results in “a release of endogenous opioids producing analgesia in preparation for death.” The situation of the soldier during the First World War was such that he had to undergo sustained trauma of this nature. Munroe and most of the other soldiers in the regiment would feel that “release of endogenous opioids” on multiple occasions, whether or not they died. Jaak Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 164. In their study into “Psychic Freezing” Turan and Dutton find the presence of “malevolent authority” key to understanding trauma reactions and investigate massacres, concentration camps and hostage takings. Their understanding of authority relates in a very real way to the soldier’s status as prisoner of his officers and command (“the soul’s incarceration by some misguided sergeant-major” of company life as McLaren put it): “This regressive aspect of the trauma [freezing] makes victims particularly susceptible to obey captors or malevolent authorities. In such circumstances, authority, and the ability to command obedience, may be defined by whoever is holding the weapons and giving the orders: the captor.” Serbulent Turan and Donald G. Dutton, “Psychic Freezing to Lethal Malevolent Authority,” *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* 2, no. 3 (2010), 11. The presence or absence of authority, malevolent or otherwise plays an important role in trauma reactions. To a certain extent these trauma reactions were hard wired to the pain and fear centres of the brain. It is important to understand that, in soldiers, these biological reactions were not reported as solely negative experiences. Harari quotes a Vietnam veteran (who tended to be more forthright on these matters) on surviving a dangerous situation. “I felt a drunken elation. Not only the sudden release from danger made me feel it, but the thrill of having seen the platoon perform perfectly under heavy fire and under my command. I had never experienced anything like it before... an ache as profound as the ache of orgasm passed through me.” Y. Harari, *The Ultimate Experience: Battlefield Revelations and the Making of Modern War Culture, 1450-2000* (New York: Springer, 2008), 13. On the relative forthrightness of First World War soldiers and Vietnam

There is no evidence to support the claim that Bobbie Burns was anything of an “official” mascot of the PPCLI, except for the mute witness of a dog collar fitting Munroe’s description which sits on display in the PPCLI gallery in Calgary. Although he definitely made it as far as England, it seems unlikely that he came with Munroe to France, or anywhere near the front-lines. Munroe has it that, during a social meeting with a group of women of high standing including Princess Patricia, Burns was given the collar: “the most beautiful of them, made a very special fuss over me. I noted that she was called a ‘Princess.’ I was given a very beautiful collar with a badge on it, and on the plate were engraved the words: BOBBIE BURNS. P.P.C.L.I.” Such a collar exists, but there is no evidence as to its early providence. What Munroe is really talking about in his description of Patricia bestowing a dog collar upon Bobbie is the familiarity and graceful interaction with the personage of the Crown – embodied in this case by a beautiful young woman – that served to help motivate the “Pat’s Pets” to war. This familiarity with the personage of the British crown in Canada, England, France, and anywhere in between is a consistently recurring theme in many of the memoirs of the Patricia’s specifically, and Canadian soldiers generally.

Many men had dog stories of their own, and dogs were one of the ways that men tried to cope with life at the front. Talbot Papineau, for example, wrote extensively about his terrier “Bobs” whom he likely did take to the front-lines (rules like “no dogs allowed” are a lot more flexible for officers than for private soldiers). He claims to have once crawled out into No Man’s Land to rescue Bobs when his leash was stuck to the barbed wire. The love of dogs was important to these warriors, and gave them something to care about aside from the mundanity, horror and death that was their occupation at the front. After the war, dogs also helped to bring men back to themselves.

soldiers see, Joanna Bourke, *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkillers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 30-45, 297. On the coping mechanisms of soldiers see Cook, “Spatial Sanctuaries,” 9-15.

In person, Munroe was not given to idle boasting or lying – Alexander Rennie remembers him as “a very modest man”³²⁰ – but in *Mopping Up* we see Munroe’s work at the crafting of a better truth, or at least one more palatable to the audience he was addressing. No one, probably, goes to war thinking that they are going to commit atrocities against other human beings. Instead – overwhelmingly – in Germany as much as in Russia, Britain and Canada, citizens tended to discuss their decision to go to war in terms of defending and protecting their homes. Papineau, for example, stated that if Britain lost the war, “Canada might very well have been paying tribute and learning to decline German verbs, probably the only thing German she could have declined.”³²¹ If Munroe is to be believed, it was the thought of protecting the victims of war that motivated the Patricia’s to fight. As he writes,

Then the thoughts o the deaths o innocent women and children; Louvain and the ravished nuns. The story of four babes sent to bed early by father and mother, with kisses; the call of the parents at a neighboring house; their return to find police and firemen digging out the mangled corpses of their children from the ruins of their beautiful home, destroyed by a Zeppelin bomb. And my blood—the blood of a simple, honest, peaceful dog that cannot comprehend such cowardice and such iniquity—ran faster in my veins, and I longed to leap at the throat of one of those murderers!³²²

Whatever spiritual crises existed in his actual war experience, in his memoir he consistently puts forward the idea that what the Pats were doing was right and necessary, a common script for most Canadians during the war years.

No veteran here studied could substantiate many of the claims that Munroe makes. None remembered Bobbie Burns having been the mascot, having met Princess Patricia, or having gone with the regiment to France. Furthermore, on the question of whom Munroe was with when the war broke

³²⁰ Alexander Rennie letter to V.D. Cole, 6 Oct 1975, 31(42)-9.

³²¹ Papineau, “Open Letter to Mr. Henri Bourassa,” 20e.

³²² Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 114. On zeppelin raids and their impact on recruiting see, James Morgan Read, *Atrocity Propaganda, 1914-1919* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 291. Emily Robertson, “Propaganda and ‘manufactured Hatred’: A Reappraisal of the Ethics of First World War British and Australian Atrocity Propaganda,” *Public Relations Inquiry* 3, no. 2 (2014): 258, 262. Jerry White, *Zeppelin Nights: London in the First World War* (New York: Random House, 2014), 32-7, 131-3. Gianelli also describes witnessing a bomber raid on London and its motivating effect when he departed for France. See page, 253-254.

out, no names from within the regimental records fit the circumstances that Munroe describes; no soldier named Rob or Fred became casualties in the period that Munroe details in his memoir. Instead, Bobbie Burns, Rob, and Fred, the main characters of Munroe's tale, serve as archetypes for more difficult-to-articulate truths.

Piper George Harvie takes umbrage with the very core of Munroe's story, and the service of its narrator Bobbie Burns: "After being discharged from Hospital Jack returned to Canada, and the story I got was as follows; Jack Munro [sic] and his Dog crossed the Border on a Recruiting Stunt, the dog dressed up with a small *Red Cross Flag*. This was before the 'Yanks' came over to help us [sic³²³] it could have been a good recruiting stunt, but when he told them over there that He and the Dog. (Never knew the dog[']s name) was with him always and attended the wounded in 'No Man[']s Land.' *Nuff Said.*"³²⁴ Another original member of the "Pats' Pets," Rennie, concurs with Harvie when he answers a request for information about Munroe: "As to having a dog he may have had one but it certainly never was the regimental mascot nor did it ever leave Canada."³²⁵ George Harvie believed that Munroe's story of killing a German with an axe during the first PPCLI trench raid of the war on the morning of February 28th 1915 consisted of "a lot of Hoey" and that it was "*a Pipe Dream of the Writer.*"³²⁶ Harvie had helped to carry Munroe out to a dressing station after he was wounded by a sniper's bullet near Armentières and believes that his story surrounding the events of the trench raid had been made up. But Harvie, a stretcher bearer, would not likely have been in the demolition section of the trench raid, so how authentic is his testimony? Did Jack Munroe kill a man with an axe?

Jack Munroe has Bobbie Burns describe his participation in the first PPCLI trench raid as a confused and murderous affair in the shadows. He begins his narration in a dream state, and – as we

³²³ Munroe joined the British Canadian Recruiting Mission in the US in February 1918, the Americans entered the war on 6 April, 1917.

³²⁴ Bill Miller, "The Jack Munroe Story," 31(42)-9.

³²⁵ Rennie to Cole, *ibid*.

³²⁶ Miller, "Jack Munroe Story," *ibid*.

often see in accounts of battle – with the admonition that the true picture of it was too horrible to properly be described. The setting which Bobbie describes is the primordial forest: “We were in a bleak plain, facing a towering forest of strange and monstrous twisted shapes, which looked as if it might be an abode of horrors. Forth from this forest was coming a strange beast, with fearsome growls. I cannot describe the appearance of this monster; it was too terrible.”³²⁷ The “brute” that Munroe describes is both the enemy, coming to kill him in the German sap in the early morning hours of February 28th 1915, and something larger, perhaps the war itself or the living fear that survived in Munroe’s dreams.³²⁸ Munroe explains that what he is describing “belongs not to his recent past, but rather in the timeless state of human savageness.”³²⁹ To kill at war is to know something savage in yourself. As Bobbie Burns tells it, “Dashing toward this weird brute was my Pendragon... though strangely different. He was bearded; his hair waved in the wind; he was only partly dressed in the skins of wild animals he had killed. Above his head he was waving a great bludgeon; he was to do battle with the monster that was approaching.”³³⁰ To narrate his experience of killing, Munroe had to maximize the psychic distance between the man writing his memoirs in 1918 hoping to aid CEF recruiting, and the savage who bludgeoned a man in the heat of battle.

Munroe, who identified himself as a “mining engineer” on his attestation papers, had gained a thorough appreciation of violence – both constructive and destructive – by the time that he departed for war, but he had never killed a man. He had seen men burnt alive long before the invention of flame-throwers and threatened the use of firearms to ensure that women and children were loaded first onto

³²⁷ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 168.

³²⁸ As Roper writes on fear in soldier’s novels about the war, “the postwar memoirs and novels about fear not only emphasized the internal complexity of emotional reactions but their diversity. In so doing, they moved away from the belief in a singular, hegemonic notion of manliness and towards a more differentiated perception of masculine subjectivity.” This quote seems to describe what Munroe went through, and McLaren as well (a man who literally got out of the war by wearing women’s clothing). Roper, “Between Manliness and Masculinity,” 356. See also, John Dollard and Donald Horton, *Fear in Battle* (New York: AMS Press, 1976).

³²⁹ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 168.

³³⁰ Ibid.

the last ferry departing South Porcupine (as well as handily beating a “navvie” who wanted to contest a spot on it). As a prospector, he had gained an appreciation of how to build and simultaneously how to demolish. As such, it seems entirely plausible that Munroe had volunteered to be amongst the section, drawn from his company, to demolish the German saphead. After all, “what miners had built, miners could destroy.”³³¹ Thus, during the early morning hours of the last day of February 1915, Jack Munroe found himself armed with a literal bludgeon (his section having left their rifles in a nearby sap to conduct the furious demolition work that was the mission of the raid). He would thus have been employed in work familiar to the woodsmen – knocking something down – when his comrade, “Jackson,” discovered they were not alone.³³²

All the Germans had not been evicted from that trench! At least, there was one left. I saw the crouching, gray-clad figure creeping stealthily from a side sap; I saw his face, convulsed with hate; I saw his eyes, gleaming cruelly in the moonlight. I longed to spring at his throat, and sobbed in my sleep that I could not, for I was miles away! Now, secure as he thought in the shadows, the Hun was raising his rifle. But the eyes of my comrade, Jackson, were alert. He was working across from Pendency, though further up the trench. He chanced to turn and see the crouching figure, just aiming with the rifle. It was too far for Jackson to reach. But my Pendency was almost within arm's length of the Prussian, though with his back to him... “Jack!” yelled Jackson. “Behind you!” Like a flash Pendency whirled, instinctively swinging the ax back over his shoulder. I saw the whites of his eyes in the moonlight as he glimpsed that crouching figure. The Hun was just about to pull the trigger. But he never pulled it. Pendency swung the ax home. He was just within reaching distance. The sharp corner of the blade caught the Hun in the neck. He fell like a chopped tree. Jackson walked up and looked down at him. “I guess he's finished,” he said grimly. “Say, Jack, let's swing him on top of the parapet.” He was still wriggling as they grabbed him and heaved him up there. He made a fair target. He didn't wriggle long. The parapet was raked with machine gun fire from German emplacements farther back, in revenge for our successful raid. So the Prussian, who had thought to slay and sneak away, was finally finished by the fire from his own comrades. That incident required about a minute, all told. The whole attack was over in thirty.³³³

A lot happens in this section that is pertinent to our study. The first is the characterization of the enemy as being sub-human, a characterization that recurs throughout Munroe's monograph. The “Hun” who

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² The Jackson that Munroe refers to is likely Sergeant Richard Jackson (no. 1670) who later won the Military Medal and the DSO with the 7th Canadian Machine Gun Company. The only original named Jackson who was an NCO in No. 4 Company. “Nominal Roll WWI by Nationality and Coy,” 30(1)-1.

³³³ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 170.

wanted to “slay and sneak away” (which is actually a fair characterization of the Canadians’ goal for the raid) was disfigured with hatred. He represented a nation not of “supermen, but foe men,” or later, the contest between “good men and willing muscle pitted against machinery with devilish brains.”³³⁴ Going further, Munroe describes the first German he sees killed, a luckless fellow whom some Patricia’s lying in a forward sap can see shovelling in the predawn light.

The dull face of the shoveler belonged to a low order of intelligence; in him was no atom of initiative. The top of his head was not more than an inch or two above his large crumpled ears. Like so many of the Kaiser’s Junker-ridden subjects, he had two ideas. One was the Fatherland. The other was that the Fatherland would pension him when he grew old. In a word is here shown how cunningly the rulers of Germany have obtained their hold upon a stupid people.³³⁵

At one point Munroe recounts a dialogue between the Germans and the Canadians shouted across the trenches near Ypres just prior to the German gas assaults:³³⁶

“Men of Canada!,” Almost in this voice would drip crocodile tears; the rare sentiment of a race which can at once drop bombs on mothers and their babies, and weep over the necessity of war which rendered this action necessary. For, if the infants were boy babies, they might grow up to take a whack at Germany sometime. And, if the mothers had only girl babies; well, they might have boy babies later, and it would never do to take the chance of letting them live!³³⁷

The cheery Canadians, ready with quip and a smile on their lips, are contrasted with the dull-witted unpeople in the trenches opposite:

“Englanders, your losses must have heavy been,” would whine the voice of the Kaiserhound in reply. Why should we fight? After all, are we not brothers?” “No!” in horror yelled one big Canuck who, with a group of Pat defenders, was asked this question. “Say, if you ever dare to claim relationship to me, I’ll cut loose on you.” The usual Teutonic appreciation of the little ironies spoken by the men of the American continent is dull.³³⁸

³³⁴ Ibid., 202-206.

³³⁵ Ibid., 121.

³³⁶ The battle is remembered primarily for its being the first use of poison gas against the Canadians, although the Pats were not at the time were not part of the CEF, but rather the 80th Brigade. Their blood-letting did not begin until the advance of the Germans ground down to a bloody halt north and west of the 80th Brigades section of the line which was not initially assaulted by infantry. It was not until two weeks later that the Germans began their attempt to take the area around Bellewaerde village. See, Mark Osborne Humphries and John Maker (trans., ed.), *Germany’s Western Front: Translation from the German Official History of the Great War, 1915* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2010), 183-185.

³³⁷ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 222.

³³⁸ Ibid., 223.

Munroe, having confessed to the savage bludgeoning of a fellow human, devotes much time to unpacking the philosophy surrounding how he could do it. This quote also glibly emphasizes the element of “choice” in opening fire. The responding Canadian quips that he will only shoot (“cut loose”) if he is personally insulted by the German. The retaliatory nature of fighting and its obverse, not-fighting, continually assert themselves.

The salient image is of catching a man in the neck with the corner of his blade – a gruesome thought – and the transfiguration of the man into “a chopped tree.” The description, which – considering its ubiquity – was likely reflective of the reality of felling men, is also used as a way of making the killing understandable to his audience. The metaphor was understandable and in line with the way that Canadians presented themselves to themselves and the world. If Munroe did kill a man with an axe, then the metaphor becomes an indispensable narrative device to explain what happened to the self and others during war.

The last point that Munroe’s description of killing a man with an axe makes clear, and which is immediately pertinent to our discussion, is the cold-bloodedness that ensued immediately after such a hot-blooded act. Upon looking over the situation, Jackson decides that the easiest solution – seeing as how their rifles were stowed some ways away – was to simply lift the man atop the parapet where the German machine guns, mostly firing blind into their own forward-most position, would finish the job for them. The dying German thus helped cover the withdrawal of the Canadians, and the Bavarians finished the job that a legendary Canadian frontiersman had started. This part of the story seems so random, cruel, and oddly utilitarian that it is hard to believe it is entirely an act of fiction, or a “pipe dream” as Piper/Stretcher Bearer Bill Miller argued sixty years after the fact.

There is substantial contextual information surrounding the raid, which was ordered just over a month after the Patricia’s had first entered the trenches. They had been in and out of the front-lines six times, or completed six “tours” – to use an apt and precise military phrase that continues to recur in the

lexicon. The lines were relatively static, but they had also only been in existence for upwards of three months by the time that the Patricia's arrived. Moreover, the relative immobility of the lines reflected the meteorological necessity of not launching major assaults during the winter months. This did not preclude killing on the part of either side, but it was, due to the climactic and strategic situation, incidental in nature. Local attacks for some feature were made, and they would not have seemed such small affairs to the men who perished or were wounded at them.

Preparations for the first trench raid that the PPCLI conducted during the war were, even at this early stage of the war, deliberate and comprehensive. Farquhar was, according to the first Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) Marsden, "keen on night attacks" and had begun training the battalion in them even before they left Canada while they waited for transport overseas at Lévis, Quebec.³³⁹ As Hugh Niven, an officer and later commanding officer of the regiment, has it, planning and training for the raid took place deliberately when the PPCLI was pulled out of the line to prepare and practice for the raid, a pattern that would be repeated throughout the war: "So many times during the war the Regiment would be pulled out of the trenches for a *rest*. Everyone knew what that meant[.] In a couple of weeks the Officers would be called to a conference and some raid or something would be explained and the Regiment had been selected to do or lead the job."³⁴⁰

Once they arrived, they set about their job in earnest, and aggressively pursued offensive action even during "quiet" periods in the trenches. Munroe has it that when the regiment occupied front-line trenches, "If those trenches had the reputation of being quiet ones, the situation always changed directly after the Pats entered them. Within a few days they were certain to become uproarious."³⁴¹ In late February, the Patricia's occupied trenches near St. Eloi that were opposed by an active and

³³⁹ Marsden to Kearns, 15 Mar 1962, 31(18)-9. Marsden, the first RSM, went with the regiment to England, but was struck off strength just before they left for France and granted a commission. His regimental number was 1.

³⁴⁰ Niven to MacGregor, 5 Mar 1964, 3, 31(53.2)-9.

³⁴¹ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 271-272.

“aggressive” enemy regiment of Bavarians.³⁴² After a German attack on Valentine’s day against the 82nd Brigade that had briefly dislodged the defenders from trenches 19 and 22, (the trenches were retaken by the King’s Royal Rifles (KRRs) of the 80th Brigade to which the PPCLI also belonged, at the time), the Germans had begun work on sapping a “parallel fire trench” which mirrored the front-line positions and formed a small salient protruding within a few yards of the Patricia’s position.³⁴³ This salient allowed the enemy to do “considerable damage to [trench] 21 with bombs etc.”³⁴⁴ Farquhar thus conceived of a raid which would have three effects. It would not set out to take and hold the enemy’s position, but rather to break up the monotony of trench fatigue, to “meet aggression with aggression,” and to raise the morale of the troops who, after two months of the war, were becoming disheartened by the wet, muddy and dangerous conditions. These conditions are described by Frank Conley, an early reinforcement:

The situation... at Shelley Farm in the St. Eloi sector in March, 1915 was not one to call forth bursts of enthusiasm for trench warfare. The trenches were wet and shallow, and the parapets had a nasty habit of collapsing in unexpected places at embarrassing moments. We were very close to the Germans, and if a man exposed his head for more than a moment in daytime, his beauty was likely to be marred by a sniper’s bullet. The weather was cold, and the sullen sky wept continuously for the fate of Flanders. The Germans in that sector seemed to have great superiority in artillery, and ammunitions supplies, and would shell us for long stretches without a reply from our side.³⁴⁵

The morale of his men was an important concern to the consummately professional Farquhar who strove to keep his “finger on the pulse” of his troops’ motivation throughout his service at the front. He also had that unique and unteachable quality of positively influencing his men’s attitude towards their job without condescending to or becoming overly familiar with them. A contemporary anecdote that was widely repeated amongst Patricia’s officers’ memoirs has it that when the Patricia’s found their relief postponed due to a German attack east of St. Eloi, the men (who had not slept in five days) took to

³⁴² Hodder-Williams, *PPCLI*, 1:25-26.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1:27, 30. See also map, Williams, *First in the Field*, 77.

³⁴⁴ “War Diaries,” 28 Feb 15, Appendix XIV, 19-20.

³⁴⁵ Frank Ernest Conley, “March 14th 1915,” undated (1960s), 31(42)-2.

cursing their situation. Colonel Farquhar, following his usual custom of considering the front-line as healthy as a village lane, appeared at the back of the trench: “‘And how is the merry band of sportsmen?’, he remarked cheerfully. No one had heard or noticed his approach, but the replies were ready enough: ‘Going strong, sir’ – ‘Good for another week’ – ‘Enjoying ourselves sir.’ The Colonel chuckled and departed while the men looked at each other and wondered why they had answered that way. But really there was no other.”³⁴⁶ Farquhar also understood that his men’s morale would be buoyed more by tactically successful offensive action than a chance comment on a tour of the front-line trenches. As a contemporary commentator, R. Richards has it, “shells and dangers are usually forgotten when the enemy is seen in the open.”³⁴⁷ The raid was thus conceived in part to come to grips with the enemy for the good of the morale of the men, and to the detriment of the morale of the Bavarians opposing them.

The plan of attack called for three groups to temporarily take control of the sap, kill its occupants, and destroy the fortifications. The first group was under the command of Lieutenant C.E. Crabbe, and was composed of a party of snipers who would clear the way for and cover the assault. The second group, under the command of Papineau, was to clear the sap for a length of approximately 150 yards by throwing bombs into it from above. The last group, led by CSM Lloyd, was to demolish the construction of the sap as much as possible before the whole party withdrew.³⁴⁸ In all, approximately seventy-five soldiers primarily drawn from No. 4 Company (Munroe’s), as well as the recently formed sniper section would take part in the attack.

³⁴⁶ R. Richards, *The Story of the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1917* (London: Canadian War Records Office, 1917), 7. Also quoted in, Williams, *First in the Field*, 80. A similar story is told by Hugh Niven in his correspondence, “Lt Col. Francis Farquhar,” undated, 31(53.1)-9.

³⁴⁷ Richards, *Story of PPCLI 1914-17*, 5.

³⁴⁸ “War Diaries,” Appendix XIV, 20.

Although the attack was under the overall command of Crabbe (who was the platoon subaltern for 13 Platoon No. 4 Company),³⁴⁹ it was led in fact by the sniper Corporal Ross who was killed immediately upon entering the German saphead. CSM Lloyd was also killed early in the attack. Despite these casualties, the raid went largely according to plan. It was launched just prior to daylight, at 0515, and the German saphead was only occupied for twenty minutes, giving the demolition party time to destroy about thirty yards of the sap.

The raiders were loath to depart from the dry, well constructed and drained trench that the Germans occupied, but they had no choice. As Munroe writes, “the victorious ‘Pets’ were inside [the German sap] only long enough to discover how much deeper, better drained and altogether comfortable it was than those first trenches of the Allies.”³⁵⁰ The deconstruction of the trench had been completed in record time, and Munroe states that it was utterly destroyed by the time that they withdrew: “Dugouts and breast-works were destroyed and the trench was shoveled half full of its original dirt... It would be easier for the Huns to dig a new trench than to bother with the old one!”³⁵¹ They executed a difficult withdrawal under fire, an action during which they sustained further casualties, and made it back to their front-lines in a rather pell-mell fashion. The raiders had suffered sixteen casualties: five killed, nine wounded and two missing.³⁵² The high casualty rate is likely explained by the fact that the raiders had largely lost tactical surprise as one of their officers, Lieutenant (“Shorty”) Colquhoun, was captured during a reconnaissance prior to the raid.

They had, at the very least, done something to break up the monotony of trench warfare described by Gault in a letter as “2 days out, 2 days in, 2 days out, 2 days in & 6 days rest.”³⁵³ The raid had tactical significance in the ongoing fight to control the “Mound” near St. Eloi that Hodder-Williams

³⁴⁹ C.E. Crabbe, “P.P.C.L.I. Regt. No. 4 Co. Platoon No. 13, Notebook,” 31(5)-3.

³⁵⁰ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 171.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 172

³⁵² “War Diaries 1914-19,” Appendix XIV.

³⁵³ Galt quoted in, Williams, *First in the Field*, 76.

describes as a “clay dump twenty feet high and seventy feet wide.”³⁵⁴ The mound overlooked the southern defences of Ypres, also known as the ramparts, and thus proved an important tactical position that the enemy was determined to seize. The following month saw a pitched battle for the mound take place on and after March 14th, 1915.

We know from the War Diary that about twenty-five men of No. 13 and 14 Platoon, led by CSM Lloyd, took part in the demolition portion of the attack. Lloyd was a tall man whose family was from Winchester and – as such – the regiment’s training there would have been a homecoming for him. He was killed during the attack. Some of those who can be identified as taking part in the raid survived, such as Sergeant Jackson, but none appear to have left papers or accounts to substantiate Munroe’s. *Mopping Up* may well be the only surviving narrative of that hurried but thorough demolition work that took place under that wan February moonlight, just before dawn.³⁵⁵

The material that survives in the PPCLI archives tends to mirror the official statements of the time, and especially Colonel Farquhar’s official narrative of the raid. As was exceedingly common at the time, only the officers who led the raid are named in Farquhar’s statement: Crabbe and Papineau “showed very great dash, and ran the Teutons off their legs.”³⁵⁶ Considering Papineau and his section were dropping bombs into the still-manned trench, it seems possible that Farquhar was speaking literally. The Colonel makes clear that the primary objective of the raid was to demolish the enemy sap as far as possible, and the killing was only a necessary and morale-building precursor and concomitant to that work: “For various reasons it was inadvisable to occupy the trench, so I got leave to rush it and pull down the parapet.”³⁵⁷ The men are mentioned, but not named; but Farquhar believed “nothing

³⁵⁴ Hodder-Williams, *PPCLI*, 22.

³⁵⁵ Tennyson’s essential bibliography of war memoirs, for example, lists eighteen entries related to raids, but none of them include a Patricia, and none describe the first “Canadian” trench raid of the war. Brian Tennyson, *The Canadian Experience of the Great War: A Guide to Memoirs* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 554.

³⁵⁶ Newspaper clipping, *The Daily Colonist*, Victoria B.C., 23 Mar 1915, 1, 31(22)-1.

³⁵⁷ Farquhar telegram to Robert Borden, 4 Mar 1915, 31(26)-4.

could have been more spirited than the way the men went in.”³⁵⁸ A.W. Lang, a sniper attached to the raiding party, remembers firing steadily down the newly occupied trench for twenty minutes after it was occupied: “we got word that we were going to make an attack. (The first real attack)... We got [to the German front-line] and took over their trench full of Germans... I and another sniper was then [sic] instructed to open fire down the trench and keep it up for 20 minutes... I kept up a steady firing to my rear until the lieutenant came back and told me to get out as all the rest had gone.”³⁵⁹ The attack appears to have happened in much the way that Munroe describes, but there does not appear to be corroborating evidence substantiating Munroe’s description of the demolition of the German trench or his account of killing a German with an axe.

One of Munroe’s biographers, D.F. Parrot, who served in the Patricia’s after the war, interviewed the Piper and stretcher bearer J.M. Robertson who, together with Bill Miller, “did NOT MENTION Munroe’s dog or his double bitted axe, nor his winning of the MILITARY CROSS.”³⁶⁰ Miller, Rennie and Robertson were responding specifically to a 1975 article about Munroe that appeared in *MacLean’s* magazine; its exaggerations, heaped on top of those of Munroe in *Mopping Up*, led these men to take offense at the hyperbolic memory it portrays.³⁶¹ Rennie remembers Jack as a “good soldier [who] would have hated to have seen that piece.”³⁶² The aged Rennie chiefly remembers Munroe as an intensely religious man with a large appetite. On one occasion Munroe had “shamed” Rennie into accompanying Munroe into No Man’s Land to harvest some potatoes growing there: “He kept talking religion all the time.”³⁶³ He certainly prayed at the front: on one occasion, he said the Lord’s Prayer over

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ A.W. Lang, quoted in Zubkowski, *Faith and Freedom*, 58.

³⁶⁰ D.F. Parrott letter to V.D. Cole, June 12th 1975, 31(42)-9.

³⁶¹ Harry Bruce, “A Small Hand for a Heavyweight,” *MacLean’s*, May 1975.

³⁶² Alex Rennie, quoted in Ibid., 6 Oct 1975.

³⁶³ Ibid.

his hastily buried comrades while under effective enemy rifle fire.³⁶⁴ This raises the question of how a deeply Christian man could take up arms and kill other Christians. In print, this is not a question that Munroe, perhaps understandably, dwells upon. Indeed, he dismisses the religious status of the Germans as simply “godless Huns.”³⁶⁵ In truth, considering Munroe’s later transfer to the stretcher-bearers (see below), it seems entirely possible that he was much more conflicted on this question than he has Bobbie Burns present him in print.³⁶⁶

The hyperbole intended to the telling of Munroe’s story certainly did not originate in the 1970s with the article in *MacLean’s*. The *New Liskeard Speaker* claimed, as early as June 18th, 1915, that Munroe was “credited with having tossed an opponent over his shoulder with his bayonet, and still on another occasion he is credited with having used his two big fists with more success than it was possible to use his bayonet.”³⁶⁷ Munroe himself did not claim any such feat: however, it may be true that Munroe “more than did his share while on the firing line as one of the original heroic Princess Patricia’s.”³⁶⁸

Captain Thomas Magladery, a friend of Munroe’s who had commissioned into the 37th Battalion, met with Jack while he was convalescing in England. Magladery describes meeting Munroe with a group

³⁶⁴ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 149.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 105.

³⁶⁶ On the question of Christians killing Christians see, Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 63-83. See also, Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*, 175-80. For the Canadian example see, Vance, *Death So Noble*, 35-44. Ferguson quotes the “shocking Advent sermon” of the Bishop of London, A.F. Winnington-Ingram: “a great crusade – we cannot deny it – to kill Germans: to kill them, not for the sake of killing, but to save the world; to kill the good as well as the bad, to kill the young men as well as the old, to kill those who have shown kindness to our wounded as well as those fiends who crucified the Canadian sergeant...” The Bishop did, at least, leave out the women and children (although they were being starved to death by the blockade, a fact that no one ever really wanted to talk about). Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 51.

³⁶⁷ “‘Jack’ Munroe Wounded,” *New Liskeard Speaker*, 18 Jun 1915, transcr. Dion Loach. *Canadian Great War Project* <http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/transcripts/transcriptDisplay.asp?Type=N&Id=491> (9 Aug 2017). It might be pointed out that it is also theoretically possible that Jack Munroe, at the height of his strength and armed with a bayonet, actually did throw a German over his shoulder, especially if he was a small German. Indeed, it was much more possible in 1915 than in 2018, at least in the mind’s eye of the reader.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., “Jack Munroe’s Wound,” 27 Aug 1915, <http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/transcripts/transcriptDisplay.asp?Type=N&Id=506> (9 Aug 2017).

of 37th Battalion officers over dinner at the Moorland Hotel: "In spite of the fact that I was dead tired, we sat up till 11.30 listening to some of his wonderful experiences... It worries him some though, that he is going to be so long in getting well as he is in a hurry to get another crack at the Huns with his old Battalion."³⁶⁹ In that letter Magladery does not go into detail about what experiences Munroe had shared, but notes that "it is almost impossible to make one of those fellows, who have been in the thick of things, talk much about it."³⁷⁰ This, as we have seen, is a common phenomenon amongst soldiers who have been at the front conversing with those who have not.

In publishing *Mopping Up*, Munroe was attempting to honour those men who served with him in the regiment. His dedication is to the "Memory of his Comrades of the Princess 'PAT'S' who have 'GONE WEST.'"³⁷¹ These men writ large are the main characters in his account of the regiment. He was right to say that they had a certain "Patricia swagger," granted them by their role as front-line fighters: "They had the 'fighting swing,' the 'fighting build,' the 'fighting face.' Even their clothes seemed cut for a 'rough-house' at a moment's notice. They were of the proper breed those boys. They possessed that soft, easy, mild-mannered... look of a hand grenade, just before it explodes!"³⁷² According to Munroe, Canada, a "a nation of Spartans,"³⁷³ had produced these warriors. Although many had originated in the British Isles, it was the climate and the frontier life that gave them the impetus and breeding to fight. That similar things were being said in Britain, France, and Germany (to name but a few) does not change the fact that this is how Canadians tended to present their warriors to themselves, as products of climate and rigour.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁹ Ibid., T. Magladery, 28 Jan 1916.

<http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/transcripts/transcriptDisplay.asp?Type=L&Id=438> (9 Aug 2017).

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 22 Jan 1916. <http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/transcripts/transcriptDisplay.asp?Type=L&Id=447> (9 Aug 2017).

³⁷¹ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 5.

³⁷² Ibid., 72.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ See for example, Berger, *Sense of Power*, chaps. 5, 10.

It is against this backdrop, the conception of the fighting men of the PPCLI, that Rob and Fred appear as the archetypal characters. Both were Canadian and Bobbie presents them, together with Munroe, as modern iterations of Dumas' three musketeers (then Bobbie Burns would be d'Artagnan, which works). Together they had placed their hands together and said simply "we're on."³⁷⁵

Rob was the "dreamer, the poet, who had so often stood with me upon the hilltops while we watched the outspread grandeur of God." In England, his poetic muse helped to keep morale high in the interminable rain, wet and muck of Winchester. The men were waiting to get put in billets, and an anticipatory Fred observes that, "you can bet your shirt that I'll trot out my jane in style!" once ensconced in a farm house.

Wait a minute,' interposed Rob, the poet of the 'Soldiers Three.' 'This glad occasion inspires my muse afresh. You know she's been developing ringbones and spavins lately, in all this muck. But I feel her jumping within me. Just a second now I I've got it I Listen to this. "When foxy Freddie draws a billet/ Sequestered from the damned old rain,/ He'll grab dull care and straightway kill it,/ A-hiking with his piking jane."³⁷⁶

But the dreamer and the poet was also a professional killer, and had done his best to bring the fight to the enemy. Rob's status as a man-at-arms allowed him to look forward to the company of a "picking jane," and imagine situations where such encounters would be realized. Monroe specifically draws the parallel between Rob's specifically and the Patricia's generally experience of romantic love, homo-social love, and the experience of battle. "Poor boys of mine! You saw the real fighting you wanted, and the God of Battles Who is also the God of Love knows how bravely you fought."³⁷⁷

At the front Rob was constantly watching for his chance to kill, and dies due to his efforts to take life early in the war. Bobbie has it that Rob and a man named Jim were laying silently in a listening post "only a few yards from the enemy wires," when:

³⁷⁵ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 28, 175, 255. He repeatedly emphasises the phrase, and although the two words seem striking in their simplicity and matter-of-fact nature, it was an important idea that Munroe was attempting to convey. All that mattered was that the men had made up their minds to go, and to go together.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 83.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 58.

Immediately there was afforded the daring Canadians an opportunity they never missed. The flare of a star shell, from a point that made it impossible for the Germans to see them, crouched in the shell crater, revealed to them a dim form upreared above the Teuton trench, striving with sharp eyes to pierce the gloom and ascertain if there were really intruders present close to the barbed wire. "Can you see him, Rob?" excitedly whispered Jim, very low. "Yes. I can just get ' six o'clock ' on his knob on the sky line," replied Rob, meaning that he had drawn a deadly bead on the Hun's head. "Duck when I pull!" In that very instant he fired. They dropped into the, deep sheltering crater, and hugged the earth. "You got him!" whispered Jim. "I saw him tumble in. Good old boy! And it's not the first one for you, either!"³⁷⁸

As Rob discovered, war is not an action performed on an inanimate object (to paraphrase Clausewitz), and the enemy's friends have weapons too. In this case, they replied with the ubiquitous bomb: "The Huns' suspicions were aroused, and with these blue-white Flares, like the livid lights which the poet Dante conjured in the hell of which he wrote, they were searching No Man's Land. Then: Bang! There came a terrific explosion. One of the Germans-through mere chance-had thrown a bomb directly into the crater wherein the two men were hiding."³⁷⁹ Here again he focuses on the "mere chance" with which the Huns had hit Rob, attempting to allay any suspicion that it might have been some tactical error on the part of the Canadians – Rob's muzzle-flash, a silhouette against the sky-line, or a sudden movement – which drew a response from an alert-eyed sentry.

It was the Patricia's stand at Frezenberg where Fred, the second of the soldiers three, was killed. Again, his disappearance is set within a suitably martial setting, not defencelessly and passively having the war come to him, but actively seeking out the enemy.

It happened in the thick of the maelstrom of the afternoon. Fred, who had fought the Germans to a standstill from cover to cover, was last seen with another man shooting from a peephole and leveling Germans with every shot; for Fred never missed. Thereafter, no survivor of the battalion could remember seeing him. They knew only that when night came, and they were finally relieved, he was not with them, nor did he answer at another earthly roll call.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 176.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 177.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 256.

Once again, we see the stress laid on war-fighting ability in Munroe's text. Fred's was also the most slowly heartbreaking of the fates that war can mete out to those who remain at home. To not know where, or even if, a loved one perished beyond a reasonable doubt is caustic to the human heart.³⁸¹

No such men existed, as such, but they were archetypes of the type of man that Munroe had encountered in the regiment and wanted to present to his audience.³⁸² The overwhelming majority of the Robs and Freds who were original Patricia's were struck off the strength of the regiment (93 out of 134), either due to wounds (like Munroe), or to other units of the CEF or BEF. Of the 134 men with some variation of Rob or Fred in their names who originally enlisted in the battalion, a (perhaps somewhat surprising) 110 survived the war.³⁸³ Each Rob and Fred listed in the regimental files had their own unique story of the war. The 4th man to join the regiment (as denoted by his service number, 4), William Frederick Woodhams, was wounded on the darkest night of March 1915, and was struck off strength on March 30th of the same year. He was a lawyer in civilian life who seems oddly taciturn on his attestation papers. The 5th 4 39-year-old's next of kin lived in Harowville Saskatchewan, but that was all the information that he volunteered. Wilfred Tallamy, who lived in the tiny hamlet of Meeting Creek, Alberta, was wounded on that first trench raid in late February 1915 – the Canadian introduction to what Papineau would later call the "incidental fighting" that filled the spaces between battles. The 244th man to join the regiment was Alfred Blachford, a police-man from London, Ontario, survived the end of

³⁸¹ See, for example Hochschild's description of Rudyard Kipling's reaction to his son's disappearance at the Battle of Loos in 1915. Adam Hochschild, *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 167-9, 363-4.

³⁸² Specifically, casualties were recorded, by hand, as information was canvassed from company officers being put down in a regimental casualty book. As well, a digital database containing information on every member of the Patricia's during the First World War has been compiled by the regiment, and Hodder-Williams devotes much of the second volume of his work to a nominal roll of those men who served in the regiment during the First World War. "Nominal roll: Casualties," 30(16)-1. See also, "Nominal roll: Casualties," 30(17)-1. "A2014.99.22ww1 roll more information," Excel Spreadsheet, PPCLI Archives.

³⁸³ The digitized nominal roll indicates that of 5009 men who served, at some point, with the Princess' Regiment, 489 had some combination of Rob or Fred in their name. Of those, 134 were Originals. Ibid.

his marriage only to be killed three years into the war at Passchendaele.³⁸⁴ Robert Cairns, a tea-blender and Boer War veteran born in Kingston, Ontario, and residing in Hamilton was wounded and struck off the strength of the regiment in January 1915. Frederick Hinds, a hairdresser, never made it as far as France being struck off strength in England. The absence of his tonsorial skills at the front may have been what led to Walter Draycot being given the unofficial official position of regimental barber. Robert Graham, a groom who had seen previous service with the 13th Hussars and had spent two years in South Africa, went missing and was presumed killed at Bellewaerde Lake, during the initial bombardment three days prior to the main German assault on Frezenberg. Graham was the 117th person to join the regiment; the 118th person, Albert Daffern was also a groom, and presumably the pair were friends and stuck together upon arrival at the Ottawa depot. Both were killed on the same day at Bellewaerde.

It is entirely possible that, in likening his story and that of his friends at the front to Dumas' three musketeers, Munroe is reflecting something of the truer story of the "three musketeers of the PPCLI." An article in a special "war deeds" supplement to the *London Illustrated Daily News* tells such a story in similar terms to those used by Munroe. The illustration is a painting by the popular illustrator and artist R. Caton Woodville that depicts three musketeers of the Princess Pats. The caption reads:

A tumulus [a mound of earth and stones raised over a grave] situated a little behind the Canadian position was occupied about the second or third night by three Canadian sharpshooters, who taking up their station during the darkness, cut a couple of dugouts at its base and fortified the top with a few bricks behind which they took cover. At daybreak they found that they commanded a fine view of the German first-line trench and its supporting or

³⁸⁴ Alfred Blachford (244), Service Record, RG150, box 768, file 37, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=45822> (9 Aug 2017). Wilfred Tallamy (716), Service Record, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=266419> (5 Aug 2017). Robert Cairns (1185), Service Record, RG150, box 1378, file 38, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=81515> (5 Aug 2017). Frederick Hinds (51204), Service Record, RG150, box 4380, file 12, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=460535> (5 Aug 2017). Robert Graham (117), Service Record, RG150, box 3710, file 2, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=424249> (5 Aug 2017). Albert Daffurn (118), Service Record, RG150, box 2257, file 19, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=331730> (5 Aug 2017).

reserve dug-outs, occupied by the Prussian Guard. The Germans, in fancied security, were strolling about between the dug-outs and the trench (there was no shell-fire from the British at the moment). The three Canadians opened a brisk fire on the unsuspecting enemy, who immediately scuttled into their holes like rabbits, but losing nine or ten killed before they were concealed. All day long the men on the tumulus were under all kinds of fire, and they in [their place] kept the enemy from as much as showing a finger. When darkness fell again they retired back to the trenches. The only casualty of these modern Three Musketeers being one with a slight bullet wound in the hand.³⁸⁵

Munroe is not alone in likening the exploits of his regiment to those of famous characters from history and literature. Indeed, unlike Munroe, the author of the *London Illustrated News* piece, or the “eye-witness” officer whom he interviewed, likens the actions of the Patricia’s to those of the Musketeers during the siege of the Bastion of St. Gervais. One can imagine these private soldiers holding a “council” akin to that of Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and d’Artagnan in which a plan was developed like that of Dumas’ characters. As Athos has it, “As soon as the enemy are within musket-shot, we must fire upon them. If they continue to advance, we must fire again. We must fire as long as we have loaded guns.”³⁸⁶ Although not exactly the height of tactical sophistication, Athos’ plan had the benefit of being simple and easy to execute. This is much the same as the plan the newspaper describes of those Patricia sharpshooters who, taking advantage of the slight rise in the ground, fired for as long as they could at the exposed enemy some few hundred yards distant.

It may seem surprising that the “three musketeers” trope could continually recur during a war that was fundamentally different from anything that Dumas could have imagined just short of hell, and certainly was – at least as it is presented in the modern historiography – no place for the adventurous nobility that characterizes his protagonists. But the way that the war is presented today is fundamentally different from the way that it was presented to the public in 1915. Consistently the PPCLI described their exploits, or had them described by others, within the realm of chivalry, valour, and

³⁸⁵ “The Canadian Contingent,” *Illustrated London News*, 22 Mar 1915.

³⁸⁶ Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*, trans. Auguste Maquet, 2 vols. (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1893), 2:180.

a medieval code of conduct (in the best sense of the term) towards each other, and the women they sought to protect.³⁸⁷ Rob, Fred, and Jack are a good example of this, but far from the only ones.³⁸⁸ In a war that was supposed to have put paid to the very notion of the nobility of war, gallantry is the word that continually recurs throughout many of the descriptions of the Princess Pats. It was their status as warriors, constantly looking to bring the fight to the enemy, that allowed this mystique to grow up around the regiment during its early months in France. That that mystique stood at odds with the reality was something understood by front-line combatants like Munroe, but they tended to hide that truth in print, at least during the war.

Despite the fine spirit with which Munroe went into the attack, it is not at all clear that the martial ardour with which he arrived in France survived the raid unscathed. Something happened that deeply affected Munroe's image of himself as a soldier during the trench raid. Just over two weeks after the raid on March 17th, Munroe requested and received a transfer from No. 4 Company into the stretcher bearers.³⁸⁹ Regimental records indicated that it was in that capacity that he served out the remainder of his front-line service. The fact that Munroe does not mention his transfer throughout the monograph is important. When writing in 1918, Munroe was defending his idea of the conduct of the war to a still belligerent nation, and the arguments that had driven him to war a long four years earlier. He was thus interested in presenting his contemporaries with an account of the "fighting ways" of the Princess Pat's. His service with the stretcher-bearers stood at odds with his central narrative, that he was a warrior intent on killing as many of the enemy as possible, and facilitating his comrades in the

³⁸⁷ This was of course, not specific to the PPCLI and every nation's propaganda attempted to present Great War soldiers as modern Knights, despite how jarring that presentation was when juxtaposed with the realities of gas warfare and drumbeat artillery slaughter. See, Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 221.

³⁸⁸ Lynch, for example, describes being part of a group of three musketeers only to go berserk when one of them is killed. See below, pg. 268.

³⁸⁹ "Nominal Roll KIA, Wounded, Hospital," June 1915, M, 30(19)-1.

same occupation. It may have been the fact of his bludgeoning a man with an axe, killing a fellow human being for the first time, that shook him so deeply that he requested a transfer into a non-combatant role. Although Munroe does not state anything of the sort, this idea would certainly fit the timeline and subtext of his monograph.

He describes his experiences as a stretcher bearer in *Mopping Up* only tangentially, although some of his descriptions are clearly eye-witness statements once one knows that Munroe was transferred. For example, giving the setting as the beautiful, if soon-to-be demolished village of Hooge on the St. Eloi front, he describes a well cultivated “gentleman’s estate” with an artificial lake and many boats. There was also a pleasant woodland where the PPCLI dugouts were located, and near which the soldiers could spend their pay at the quaint *estaminets* on wine or *café au lait*. It is interesting to think of the PPCLI enjoying a latte break from the front-lines, but “such surroundings... were far too ideal for the vocation of soldiering in deadly earnest.”³⁹⁰ After a few days the Pats returned to Polygon Wood that, he claims, came to be known as “Dead Man’s Wood” shortly thereafter: “Still, these were the only trenches the Pats had yet occupied from whence a wounded man could be removed during the day-time... because of a low hollow leading straight back to the dressing station, this hollow sheltered the wounded and the stretcher-bearers from the enemy fire.”³⁹¹ This would likely not have been part of the ken of an unwounded man of a rifle company.

Certainly, Munroe relived the horror of that savage dawn long after the raid was over and he had returned safely to his trench, and later the safety of his familiar north country. It is, of course, Bobbie who experiences the terrors of “something alien, sinister, intrusive, this menace that the night held.”³⁹² It was the silence of the north that had become “a thing of terror, a brooding strain that would

³⁹⁰ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 216.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 216-217.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 314.

presently snap and release an appalling climax which it was now breeding.”³⁹³ Despite the fact the Munroe was sleeping peacefully, “The ax that he had carried in the trenches, as in the forest... by his side,” Bobbie was carried away into a vision of horror and fear that had begun on the night of the trench raid.

Out of the Shadows of the bush, into the wavering circle of radiance cast by the dying fire, leaped several crouching, savage, gray-clad figures. Bent like uncouth apes, as had been their fore-runners leaping to their death in No Man’s Land at the Second Battle of Ypres, they came bounding towards the shelter were slept my Pendragon. In the hands of these ghostly Huns were fixed bayonets. I wriggled in an effort to rise and defend Pendragon, but a paralysis of horror held me. My snarling mouth loosed a strange sound, the mingling of a growl of rage and a whine of fear. Like mad I struggled to rise, but the net of my fears held me helpless, threshing, raging.³⁹⁴

It was a common phenomenon for veterans to speak about being trapped in the horrors of war, their own actions being the most disturbing. We might remember Cary’s description of killing a German and seeing him fall “straight forward like a chopped tree.”³⁹⁵ Both Munroe and Cary intentionally distance themselves from the killing act, and attest to being haunted by it: Cary describing a moving picture playing through his mind like a film reel as he sat aboard the swaying CPR car, and Munroe describing having his peaceful sleep interrupted by the terrors that the night newly held.³⁹⁶

Clearly, the war had a significant impact on Munroe’s psychological well-being. Even before the trench raid Munroe has Bobbie Burns describe his understanding of the terrible truth of war. The result of war generally and the raid specifically was that Burns’ (and Munroe’s) “world became a furious, fuming, fermenting tempest; a thing discordant, irreconcilable with what I had believed. I suffered the supreme hurt, so terrible to animals with two legs or with four; the cynical hurt of utter disillusion.”³⁹⁷

Moreover, Munroe stresses that the deep physical and spiritual suffering inherent in enduring a

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 315.

³⁹⁵ “Glimpse of the War Given by Man Who Knows,” *Calgary Daily Herald*, 16 Nov 1915.

³⁹⁶ See for example, David Williams, *Media, Memory and the First World War* (Ithaca, NY: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), 103-216.

³⁹⁷ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 119.

bombardment, in this case the one preceding the assault of the XXVII Reserve Corps at Frezenburg.³⁹⁸

“The terrain moved continually like the scenery of a swiftly moving film. The effect, after a time, on the consciousness was grisly. For the mind refused to grasp the terrible significance of what the eyes revealed... Surely, here was applied the acid test. The principle of the ‘survival of the fittest’ applied to the shuddering brain as well as to the body of blood and bone.”³⁹⁹ Munroe’s experience of the “acid test” was applied by the relentless moral, spiritual, and physical concussions of the war, and continued to reverberate within him after he left the battlefield.

Further evidence to the fact that something which happened during the raid shook Munroe deeply is found in the fact that he entirely removes himself from his own narrative for the four chapters that follow it, those chapters describing the linked battles of 2nd Ypres, Bellewaerde Lake and Frezenburg. Even though he was present at the front, in the capacity of stretcher-bearer, he never deigns to have Bobbie describe him personally during the battles. Indeed, he does not re-enter his own narrative until wounded by a sniper bullet.

Munroe states that when he was wounded on June 5th, 1915, he was acting in the capacity of a sniper, like Rob and Fred, taking the fight to the enemy. It was near Armentières, the town that housed a famous young lady, that Jack was “winged” by a German bullet, the third of which was fired at him. He begins his account of being wounded, the first reintroduction by Bobbie of “Private Pandy” for some hundred pages, as keen to begin his battalion’s daily work of shooting. Paraphrasing Longfellow,

³⁹⁸ The PPCLI official historian correctly designates the unit facing the 27th Division during the battle for the high-ground north west of Ypres. Cron records that the XXVII Reserve Corps was formed in October 1914 and made up of the volunteers who chose not to wait for conscription of the early months of the war. Thus the men who faced the Patricia’s had, like them, joined in the early days of the war (although the PPCLI was formed three months earlier than the XXVII Corps). Humphries and Maker, *Germany’s Western Front*, 182. Hermann Cron, *Imperial German Army, 1914-18: Organisation, Structure, Orders of Battle* (Solihull, UK: Helion & Company Limited, 2006), 87-88. Hodder-Williams, *PPCLI*, 1:59.

³⁹⁹ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 247.

“Something attempted: Kill a Hun—.../ And earn a night’s repose!”⁴⁰⁰ Munroe makes it clear that the Patricia’s went about their job in a workmanlike manner. This job was made more pleasant by the “perfect summer day” which “Nature was preparing to give the Western Front.”⁴⁰¹ The sun shone, even at war, and surely it was a factor in the Patricia’s somewhat restive desire to get “up and at ’em” that morning: “Spoke Private Nelson, one of the best snipers in the battalion, to Private Pandy. ‘Jack, let’s get out over here and try to cop one or two of those boys on their way back.’ So, with two well-oiled rifles and with two field glasses, the pair went back from the front trench to the snipers’ elevation.”⁴⁰² They lay in tall grass when the first round struck near them, and then another: “Nelse... Do you think they are meant for us[?]” said Jack. It was the German’s third try that hit the larger target of Munroe: “*Bang!* The sound was more than an ordinary crack. It was the signal that a bullet had torn into some object... like the sound produced by the breaking of an electric light bulb, only louder and sharper.”⁴⁰³ This sound was forever etched into his memory.

Munroe’s implication that he was out sniping, and by extension a sniper (or a rifleman proper), might seem far-fetched considering we know that he was serving as a stretcher-bearer at the time – however, it is a plausible assertion. Both the stretcher-bearers and the snipers were attached to HQ Company, so they would have been familiar with one another when at rest. Moreover, a battalion order published April 13th, 1915 demands a return from all Company Officers Commanding (O.C.s) of “the names of any N.C.O.’s and men who understand mining. A certain number of these men will be employed in making Snipers’ Burrows, when the Battalion is in the trenches. It is not the intention to

⁴⁰⁰ The original “Toiling, – rejoicing, – sorrowing,/ Onward through life he goes;/ Each morning sees some task begin,/ Each evening sees it close/ Something attempted, something done,/ Has earned a night’s repose.” H.W. Longfellow, “The Village Blacksmith,” *Ballads and Other Poems*, (1842). *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: A Maine Historical Society Website* http://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=38 (28 Aug 2016)

⁴⁰¹ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 275.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

take them away from their companies.”⁴⁰⁴ Munroe, having experience as a miner, may well have been engaged in improving the snipers’ positions, especially considering the previous day the war diary records that the battalion “Did a lot of work improving trenches.”⁴⁰⁵

Perhaps it is unsurprising to find fiction in Munroe’s account of the war, written as it was to spur recruiting and to paint a portrait of the men of the Patricia’s at war, but Munroe was angling at a deeper truth than that of mere circumstance, a literary memorial to love of comrades.⁴⁰⁶ This love was consistently cited, not just by Munroe but many others, as the chief impetus to kill and avenge the fallen. As we have seen with Papineau, the circumstances of war both stimulate romantic love and loosen the chains humans work so hard to put on their passions. War tears lovers away from each other, and very often it tears them permanently apart. Many of those who survived the war, like Munroe, were maimed, physically and emotionally, cut off from those they had left behind by traumas of nearly every variety. Munroe never moved his right arm again and had to learn to use an axe with his left.

Bobbie’s interlocution allows a fly-on-the-wall perspective of the amorous interaction of one Tom Hattrick, a handsome Calgary-man, and Etta, an English-woman from Winchester where the Patricia’s conducted their final training and equipage before being dispatched overseas with the 80th Brigade. As Munroe writes, “Of all the cruel truths the war taught me, this was the chiefest. That the saddest fate is not that of the man who dies gallantly in battle. The supreme agony is that of Love that is left to live in loneliness, with the wounds enduring.”⁴⁰⁷ Munroe states that meeting an English woman was one of the reasons that Hattrick and others had signed up in the first place. Hattrick had, “as so

⁴⁰⁴ “Battalion Orders: Field Note Book,” April 13, 1915, 34(1)-4.

⁴⁰⁵ “War Diaries 1914-19,” 4 Jun 1915.

⁴⁰⁶ Cook, applies this phrase to the writing of the regimental histories throughout the Corps, which he argues filled an important historiographical gap left by Duguid and his endlessly postponed official history. Tim Cook, “‘Literary Memorials’: The Great War Regimental Histories, 1919-1939.” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 13, (2002), 167-8.

⁴⁰⁷ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 190.

many others, Canadian and Americans alike, were to do... come overseas to find his mate."⁴⁰⁸ Only Bobbie could get away with narrating Hattrick's interaction with Etta, whose last name is left out for propriety's sake; indeed, societal taste would have demanded that men not put in print the names or details of such a scandalous nature. After asking her to marry him (while the pair was ensconced in a pew in an abandoned medieval church in Winchester), Hattrick was rebuffed (for the moment), but continued to push his physical point: "He was again clasping her, almost roughly; fairly smothering her with his caresses. She was shaken as if in a storm; there was a low moan deep in her throat... 'Tom! dear Tom; be kind to me; *help me!*' The effect was magical. His native chivalry had been stirred to its depths. 'Kind to you? Yes, little girl; I'll always be kind. Be brave! And I'll be brave, too.'"⁴⁰⁹ Interesting parallels present themselves here between the conflicted amorous power relationships Hattrick experienced *en route* to war, and the killing decision making that was done in the physically conflicted space of the Western Front, choosing to relent upon the surrender of the other party. This story furthers Munroe's point, which might even be the thesis of his work, that the "God of Battles" is also "the God of Love."

After arriving at the front, Hattrick, keen on marrying his love waiting in Winchester, decided to attempt some noteworthy action in pursuit of gaining a furlough, and was killed assaulting a German trench at St. Eloi (near Shelley Farm). As he tells Etta before leaving for the front, "I am told that ten per cent will be returning in the spring. If so, you can depend that I will be with them. I shall have a record good enough for that, my girl. *God knows I have the incentive; to see you.* [Emphasis added]"⁴¹⁰ Her heart, meanwhile, harboured "the sunlight of hope-and the shadow of dread."⁴¹¹ It was the latter that would, prove out.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 192.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 195.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 193.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 198.

What Munroe called the “wounds enduring” T.E. Lawrence characterized as “rings of sorrow,” emanating out in concentric circles from the front of the event, the place where the guns were firing.⁴¹² The staccato beat of machine guns creating ripples in the river of humanity rushing forward or standing its ground, from one hill to another for the 1678 days of the war. Both sides engaged in spraying the other with as many “death dealing artifices” as possible. That is a picture of something of the moving landscape of war. As we have seen in both Papineau and Munroe’s cases, romantic love provided an impetus to bravery and a motivation for killing the enemy, in Hattrick’s case to gain a furlough to be reunited with his love.

Munroe’s hyperbole and invention should not diminish the fundamental truths that his text elucidates. Thus, although it seems possible that much of Munroe’s memoir is an overstatement of the facts, and that George Harvie may have been right in describing certain parts of it as “a lot of hoey,”⁴¹³ the deeper truths in his work continue to ring true. For example, Munroe has it that stories of killing the enemy were passed along amongst small groups of men in a metaphorical (or literal) campfire circle, and that very few of those stories were recorded outside of those small groups of men. He describes one such story told by an anonymous Pat.

“I saw his fat German face, close up, seeming to leer at me... I took a bead. Crack! He went down in a heap. He is there yet.” A long quivering sigh broke from the lips of the men who had been listening. I sighed, too. We were all watching the face of the man who had been speaking. It was as cold and relentless as if it had been carved from stone. In it was the spirit of Canada that was willing to suffer in torment and go through the valley of the shadow of death to avenge the devilish wrongs the Hun had foisted upon the world.⁴¹⁴

Here, for Munroe, it was the killing of the enemy that had hardened the “spirit of Canada.” Here we also see shades of Bunyan and the Pilgrim’s progress into battle, suffering righteously, and an

⁴¹² “An individual death, like a pebble dropped in water, might make but a brief hole; yet rings of sorrow widened out therefrom.” T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1936), 194.

⁴¹³ Miller, “The Jack Munroe Story,” 31(9)-42.

⁴¹⁴ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 115.

undefinable national “spirit” in relation to perceived and actual German atrocities. We also see, between the lines, the coarsening of this same spirit intendant upon the act of killing.

Another truth that Munroe made clear is the cheerfulness that underlay men’s ability to face the danger and death of the front.⁴¹⁵ Prior to the German advance at Frezenburg while they were ranging their artillery before commencing the general bombardment that nearly spelled the end of the regiment, Munroe records that the Pats were “Impatient for the test.” He recalls that he did not witness among the troops “the long faces and evidences of serious thought of the hereafter that men who know nothing about it are fond of ascribing to soldiers in such a moment.”⁴¹⁶ Indeed, Munroe believes that it was in just such a circumstance that the “Louse Song” was first sung, a song that would become famous for its facetiousness: “Lousy, lousy; awfully, frightfully lousy!—/ I want to go over the sea / Where the *Allemand* can’t get at me! – / The Johnsons and whiz-bangs, they whistle and roar;/ I don’t want to go to the trench any more;/ Oh, my! I don’t want to die! – / I want to go home!”⁴¹⁷ This piece of trench verse seems to fully sum up the contradictory character of the life of the front-line soldier during the war. His presence at the front gives him the ultimate licence to say (or sing) whatever he wants to, in this case to openly confess his fears of death and destruction. Simultaneously the waggish character of the song serves to comfort and reaffirm the soldier in his surroundings and comrades; by singing of his fears, he

⁴¹⁵ On humour and cheerfulness amongst Canadian soldiers in the trenches see, Cook, “I will meet the world with a smile and a joke,” 51-9. For how this humour continued and was remembered in post-war Canada see, Vance, *Death So Noble*, 75-82.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.* The song was common amongst BEF and CEF units. For example, Lieutenant Eric Sharples of the 31st Battalion sent the lyrics to his Aunt, Mary Warren, shortly before being killed on 15 September 1916 at the Somme. Hugh A. Dempsey, “Mary Warren's Letters from the Home Front 1916-1917,” *Alberta History* 63, no. 1 (2015): 7. See also, Tim Cook, “The Singing War: Canadian Soldiers' Songs of the Great War,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 39, no. 3 (2009): 228-9. Victor Wheeler, a soldier in the 50th (Calgary) Battalion (and a teetotaler), recalls a “champagne campaign” in progress outside one of the innumerable estaminets that his Battalion frequented. “There were a hundred and one verses of ‘Mademoiselle from Armentieres’ (which our O.C., Lieutenant-Colonel L.F. Page, considered ‘too indecent’ to come out of the mouths of his troops). The evening would close with a tipsy rendition of ‘Deutschland uber Alles.’” Victor Wheeler, *The 50th Battalion in No Man’s Land* (Ottawa: CEF Books, (1980) 2000), 59. The unconquerable licence of a soldier’s humour is perfectly evidenced by singing the enemy’s national anthem, drunk, outside an estaminet.

can laugh about his fears, and laughing people are not afraid.⁴¹⁸ Sharing rations while under bombardment at Polygon Wood, Munroe gives us the *tableau* of Tim and Jake, two anonymous Pats carry on a droll dialogue during the bombardment.

Said Tim, with a pleasantly ironic glance at the rude and restricted fare just now afforded by war's rather limited cuisine: "James," to a mythical and respectful waiter, "just bring me a cup of coffee and some whipped cream. Ah, yes, James and I'll have two muffins, with plenty of butter. And hurry, James! I've an appointment with me tailor, you know." "Yes, James," chimed in Jake, "you can hurry right back to the kitchen with those muffins, you know, and bring me some that are better done. These are not quite brunette enough to suit me. How many times have I told you, James, that blond muffins are persona non gratta with me?"⁴¹⁹

Under bombardment, men sought to alleviate their dreadful and dangerous boredom with levity the likes of which are seldom recorded in the histories of the war. Moreover, this dialogue proves that fundamental fact of soldiering and men: they are often more outwardly concerned with food and women than the peril of their situation if only because the idea of food and women give them something with which to occupy their minds.

Of course, the dialogue could not be wholly separated from the horrors of war. Munroe records that the imagined conversation with Evelyn, who was to meet Tim and Jake (as well as "Mr. Wells, the novelist; Woodrow Wilson, the pulchritudinous president; and Tom Sharkey... a Spanish peanut farmer"⁴²⁰) at the "Allah Club" where they had "put six bottles of Clicquot on ice," ended with the death of one of the listeners: "Tim stopped suddenly. With Jake he reached toward a young fellow who had been standing next to them, laughing at their nonsense. The young fellow, without a sound, had crumpled in the bottom of the trench. A spreading blot of red showed upon his shirt over his left

⁴¹⁸ "You can't laugh and be afraid at the same time—of anything. If you're laughing, I defy you to be afraid." Steven Colbert quoted in, Lisa Rogak, *And Nothing But the Truthiness: The Rise (and Further Rise) of Stephen Colbert* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2011), 246.

⁴¹⁹ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 238.

⁴²⁰ Tom Sharkey was one of the heavyweights that Munroe took on during his boxing career, beating him in six rounds. Farmiloe, *Legend of Jack Munroe*, 222.

breast... A rifle bullet had gone through his heart."⁴²¹ If the First World War was the birth of irony, as Fussell claims, it was the irony inherent to the juxtaposition that Munroe posits in this dialogue. The irony that Munroe posits is of men who could boisterously sing about their desire to escape from the trenches while merrily holding those same trenches with murderous intent. Killing was a matter of opportunity, genuine cheerfulness in the face of the all-but unendurable reality allowed soldiers to stay and wait for the moment of assault when they once more would have an offensive role to play.

As we have discussed, Bobbie Burns' narration allowed Munroe the mental space he needed to speak difficult truths, and falsehoods about the war including the fact that the killing is as much about love as it was about hate. Dogs seem to understand that as well as soldiers. Eric Knight, a former Patricia and the author of *Lassie Come-Home*, tells of the love that men had for dogs in strikingly similar terms. When Lassie is taken in by an elderly couple whose only son was killed at the front, Lassie is nursed back to health at considerable (relative) expense before being allowed the freedom to continue her quest to be reunited with Sam Carraclough.

There are people whose hearts are so full of ugly fear that when they see a thirsty animal pass with a fleck of saliva on its parched jowl, they must run in terror shouting, "Mad dog!" There are others to whom every passing creature is an enemy to be harried on its way with a flung stone. But, and for this the canine world must be thankful, there are others with affection and deep understanding in their lives who bring dignity and honor to the relationship between man and dog.⁴²²

The relationship of love between men such as this and their dogs is reciprocal, like that between soldiers and their comrades. To understand that relationship was to understand what it was to be brave during the war, as Knight portrays "young Dannie's" parents remembering: "It wasn't the dying that took bravery, then, for cowards could die. It was the living that took bravery – living in that mud and rain and cold and keeping the spirit strong through it all. That was bravery."⁴²³ The *how* of men keeping their

⁴²¹ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 240.

⁴²² Eric Knight, *Lassie Come-Home* (New York: Squarefish, (1940) 2007), 181.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 166.

spirits up while waiting for the killing moment was one of the truths that both Knight and Munroe sought to explore and elucidate; both liken it to the single-minded devotion and bravery of a dog with true love in his heart.

In the preface to Lieutenant-Colonel D.S. Tamblyn's work on the horse in war, General Sir Arthur Currie wrote a statement that succinctly sums up the importance of the relationship between men and animals during the war: "War, we are told, brings out and develops all the worst in the character of men – cruelty, callousness, the lust to kill. The statement would be truer were it not one-sided... Who can forget the deeds of kindness and self-sacrifice that proved that the soul of man still held the divine spark."⁴²⁴ As we have seen, the "lust to kill" that Currie writes of coarsened and hardened men, and was one of war's chief traumas; also, as we have seen, the way back from these traumas sometimes included the unconditional love for animals, and that love and devotion was akin to the fraternity men found at war: "No one who has ever had to do with soldiers and with horses can fail to acknowledge how much the horse helped to keep up the morale of the man. The very work of tending a horse was a distraction which relieved the tension of warfare. The few minutes of pleasant companionship made him the more ready for the battle of a new day."⁴²⁵ This is exactly what Munroe is describing as his relationship with Bobbie. That the collie was never at the front is clear, but Jack still managed to commune with him, and communicate the hard-unspeakable truths about war to him, narratively and likely in real life.

Bobbie allows Jack to tell a different story, that of his utter moral destruction and reconstruction, first as a killer who cannot bring himself to remain in a combatant position, second as a crippled ("winged") version of his former self. He lies in both of those stories, but he also tells the truth in interesting ways. The axe murder itself, true or not, is a narrative device used to bring home to his Canadian and American audience that murder was necessary until final victory was achieved, and that

⁴²⁴ Arthur Currie, "Preface," in D.S. Tamblyn, *The Horse in War and Famous Canadian War Horses* (Kingston, Ont: Jackson Press, 1920), 5.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

their boys were becoming coarsened and deepened in the process of becoming killers. The image fit perfectly with preconceived notions of the Canadian frontiersman at home, and at war. That the circumstances make the story eminently plausible (especially considering that his detractors like Miller were not witness to the trench raid) does not detract from the fact that killing a man, like cutting down a tree, was a simple mechanical act of force and will. Both were useful work in building or protecting civilization (respectively), to use the rhetoric of the day. In Munroe's case, it seems to have been an act that did much to rend his psychological conception of himself, something that haunted him and something that only Bobbie (and his comrades and fellow "Pets") could understand.

Chapter 5: The Legend of Jim Christie – A Sniper's Story of Survival

If there remains some lingering doubt as to whether Jack Munroe killed anyone during the First World War, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that James Murdock Christie took lives during the war. His story was (and is) no less legendary than that of Jack Munroe amongst the backwoodsmen of his home country, and probably better known amongst soldiers and scholars of the PPCLI. However, unlike Munroe's legend, myriad sources attest to the veracity of Christie's. His story reads like the consummation of the hyperbole that surrounded Munroe; much of what was said about Jack by his ill-informed proponents, that he had won the MC or that he had been promoted to lieutenant on the field of battle, was true in the case of Christie. In fact, in *Mopping Up*, Munroe discusses Christie's prowess at the Battle of St. Eloi and Frezenburg/Second Ypres:

at a moment when it would seem as if the advancing line of his comrades must waver or break utterly under the fearful punishment it was getting, Christie made a rush forward on the left, found a good position, and, with his deadly marksmanship, covered them successfully from enemy snipers and much of the machine-gun fire. In the Second Battle of Ypres he maintained his exposed position hour after hour, firing like an automaton, with two men busy, out of sight beside him, loading his rifles. One Christie seemed worth about fifty of the enemy. It was such men that ultimately turned the tables in favor of Britain and her allies.⁴²⁶

Christie's story serves as a more discreet counter-weight to the bombast of Munroe's description of the war. Whereas Munroe tended towards hyperbole, Christie let his deeds do the talking, and did not leave much of a written legacy. As Hugh Niven wrote, "he saw everything and said nothing."⁴²⁷ Most of the information that we have about Christie is second-hand, but very little of it appears to be made up. The man did kill hundreds, likely multiple hundreds of Germans, although it seems that he seldom talked about his exploits. The only source from the war that we have written in Christie's own hand is a short diary and set of notes on training snipers. After the war, he tended to let his accomplishments speak for themselves, and did not engage in recording his experience of the war, although he did publish his own

⁴²⁶ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 255.

⁴²⁷ Hugh Niven, "Story of JM Christie, PPCLI," 31(53.1)-9.

bear memoir in 1933.⁴²⁸ After the war, he – like Munroe – lived a quiet life doing what he loved best, where he loved best, communing with nature in the land that he loved, a warden at Jasper National Park. He “had the names of all the bears, goats, sheep etc. who lived there, and called them by their first name.”⁴²⁹ He, like Munroe, seemed to have found what peace he could in the years that remained after the war, completely at home at the fringe of the savage wild.

James Murdock Christie was the son of Joseph and Helen Christie, who immigrated to Canada from Scotland in 1885 and farmed at Carman, Manitoba. Besides James, the family had at least three younger sons, Thomas, Duncan, and Robert, and a daughter Agnes.⁴³⁰ The oldest of four boys, and five siblings, James would have been eighteen when his family arrived in Canada and took the train to the great western hub of Winnipeg. Christie’s brother Robert also enlisted in the CEF, originally with the 27th Battalion before being transferred to the PPCLI in March 1915 (before Frezenburg and the PPCLI transfer to the 7th Brigade of the 3rd Canadian Division).⁴³¹ Jim Christie was one of the majority of Originals who had been born outside of Canada, but by the time that the war broke out, he had also become archetypically Canadian through his epic survival of a grizzly fight. To understand Christie’s service at the front, it seems that we must understand the legend of his animal story, much as we sought to understand Munroe’s. The grizzly bear attack was so epic, and the effects on Christie’s person, legend and later ability as a sniper so great, that it is impossible to speak of his fighting and killing the top predators amongst the Germans without first discussing his killing the bear. Indeed, as we will see, the lessons that he took away from the bear attack served him well during his service as a

⁴²⁸ See below, pg. 152.

⁴²⁹ Niven to MacGregor, 28 Mar 1965, 2, 31(53.2)-9.

⁴³⁰ Christie’s date of birth is given as April 22nd 1867 both in his corrected Service File and Obituary. Evidently that is the date that he told people after he stopped lying about his age. “Obituary,” *Saanich Peninsula and Gulf Islands Review*, 7 Jun 1939, Salt Spring Island Archives.

⁴³¹ Ibid. See also, Jim’s brother Robert joined the PPCLI in the field, and was wounded multiple times (including a gun shot wound to the chest and a fractured arm) before he was struck off strength to the Canadian Labour Pool in June 1918 suffering from “neurasthenia” or shell-shock. Robert Christie (51106), “Casualty Form,” Service Record, RG150, box 1703, file 19. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=100603> (7 Mar 2018).

sniper on the Western Front. Christie's story is that of a man who grew up with the country (he was born the same year as Confederation), and how that man learned to kill with legendary prowess in the wilds of the north before turning his skills against the Germans.

Having considered the man who emerged from the grievous wounds of a massive grizzly – for whom, given the right circumstances, a man is just another meal – we are in an excellent position to chart Christie's career as a killer of men on the Western Front. Except for a short diary, his war stories come to us largely second-hand, but nevertheless they bear all the hallmarks of authenticity, and the many men who recounted something of his story tend to agree on the details. Nevertheless, there are instances where Christie's famous name is interjected for another's, and sniper stories were especially prone to conflation as he emerged the most famous sniper of the most famous Canadian regiment of the war.

Christie's diary, kept intermittently during the year 1916, allows us some insight into how he saw the war and the world. The artifact is fascinating in and of itself, as it tells the story of the man who carried it all on its own. It is in remarkably good condition considering the passage of a hundred years, its being carried on active service on the Western Front, and the manipulation an untold number of hands. The "Ruby" diary was printed by Collins' Clear-Type Press, and Christie purchased the blue version of the book, which would have been less immediately visible than the companion Red Ruby Diary. It was printed as an insurance policy for men at the front, and contained a "coupon for £1000 Accident Insurance GIVING GREATEST BENEFITS. Covering also Weekly Payments in case of Disablement, and many other advantages."⁴³² Disablement (with a capital D) was likely much on Christie's mind when he purchased the diary. The coupon does not appear at the back of the back of the book, so presumably Christie decided to take part in the scheme. The book appears to have spent a large part of the year 1916 with Christie, as it is beaten and threadbare. Christie repaired it, expertly and functionally, with

⁴³² Christie, "Collins' Ruby Diary No. 2619," 1, 31(28)-2.

small pieces of heavy-duty tape to supplement the binding, which proved to be a century-proof solution to the problem of dragging the book in his kit through months of war. The last pages of the diary are punched through with what looks like knife, metal, or cartridge marks such as would have been made if Christie had needed a flat surface to work on a pointed metal object. The physical appearance of the artifact is an insight into the man, and its contents, which appear to be unknown to the wider historiography, bear further exploration.

As the NCO and later officer responsible for the sniper section, Christie was directly in charge of four sections worth of men, in the immediate employ of Battalion HQ. This probably accounts for some part of Christie's reputation amongst the men of the battalion. Eventually promoted to the position of master sniper (a role that still exists within each of the three battalions of the PPCLI) and later sniping officer, Christie was obviously remembered as a professional killer; his expertise was held up as a model for every one of the battalion's soldiers. He was not the only famous shot in the regiment, but he was likely the most famous shot of a regiment of famous shots. Christie's diary lists the names and service numbers of the thirty-four men he commanded during this period, and it will thus be possible to speak of the men under his command and learn something of the kind of person who served with the snipers.⁴³³

Christie eventually was granted a pension, and was invalided before the war ended. Whether or not Collins ever paid out is likely to remain a mystery forever. Christie, the man who had been mauled by a bear "like no man had ever been mauled before"⁴³⁴ and survived, came through the war in

⁴³³ The following men that are listed in Christie's diary have a file at the PPCLI archives. Brice, J.E. (51045), 31(7)-2, H. Carey (11170), 31(23)-2. J. Arthur Carswell (McG226), 31(25)-2. H.A. Craig (411128), 31(7)-3. T. Flintoft (645), 31(1)-5. T. Hampson (411078), 31(21)-6. A.R. Jones (410954), 31(27)-7. G.H. Mullin (51339) (VC), 31(40)-9. L/Cpl H. Nelson (126), 31(30)-14. D.G. Read (410998), 31(13)-11. Unfortunately, with the exception of the files for Brice, Carey, Jones and Mullin none of them contain descriptions of the sniping, or more than cursory asides about Christie. From Hampson, we have it that Christie was "blunt, said little, meant what he said and would have a good laugh after word [sic]. He was a man among men."

⁴³⁴ Niven, "Story of JM Christie," 1.

remarkably good shape. But he did not emerge completely unscathed. It is like Orwell wrote, “The war did extraordinary things to people. And what was more extraordinary than the way it killed people was the way it sometimes didn't kill them.”⁴³⁵ For Christie to have survived the war, more or less sound of body and mind, seems remarkable at this remove, but that was the way of it. Luck and skill carried Christie through his months of war service. When in a stand-up fight (metaphorically speaking as Christie tended to fire from a prone position), he usually managed to gain the element of surprise, expertly and stealthily finding the patch of ground where he could inflict maximum damage with his rifle.

Although born in Scotland, Christie had worked as a trapper, prospector, miner, guide, and hunter before the war (and before the war) becoming something essentially and mythically Canadian by the time the war broke out. He is the embodiment of Ralph Connor's character McCuaig, “a strange-looking creature. He might have stepped out of one of Fenimore Cooper's novels”⁴³⁶ with “the long, shuffling, tireless trot with which, for a hundred years, the ‘runners of the woods’ have packed their loads and tracked their game in the wilds of northwestern Canada.”⁴³⁷ Presumably Christie received the news of the war with something like the reaction of Connor's character, joining up as a matter of duty to the empire, although he was most likely in Winnipeg at the time, and not the Yukon: “If a fellow stood on one side while his country was fightin', where would he live when it's all over? He read out of the papers that them Germans were shootin' women and children... am I goin' to stand by and ask some one else to make them quit?”⁴³⁸ Certainly this is the way that Munroe remembers the war breaking out, despite McRae's dissenting testimony. Christie volunteered his services to the Pats immediately after

⁴³⁵ George Orwell, *Coming Up for Air* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939), chapter 8. *Project Gutenberg Australia*, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200031.txt> (11 Aug 2017).

⁴³⁶ Ralph Connor, *Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* (New York: G.H. Doran Co., 1919), 88. *Archive.org* https://archive.org/stream/skypilotinnomans00conn_0/page/88 (11 Aug 2017).

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

the outbreak of war, responding the way that novelists then and since have imagined the quintessential Canadian frontiersman would.⁴³⁹ Christie was taught the savageness of survival in mortal combat before most of industrial Europe, industrializing Canada, and the world at large experienced such things during the war. He understood the necessary savage violence of war with nature, which allowed him to understand the violence that would be required of him when he arrived at the front.

By the fall of 1911, Christie had spent years working as a trapper/hunter/pro prospector in many parts of Canada, but especially in the Yukon. In October, he had departed his cabin to check his trap lines, and killed a moose that he buried in a ground cache, intending to return to it later. The next day he returned to the cache to find that it had been raided, discovering, "The tracks of a huge grizzly which had robbed our cache."⁴⁴⁰ Following the tracks, Christie climbed a river bank when he was startled by "the angry snort of the grizzly which... had been undoubtedly watching me... imagine my feelings when I saw the enormous bear charging straight towards me at express speed."⁴⁴¹ Christie did not panic, but rather "shot him square in the chest with a .303 soft-nose bullet from my Ross Rifle." The mortally wounded bear continued to charge, even after Christie fired a second round "point-blank in his face."⁴⁴² It was too late to dodge the bear's charge, which was impelled and aggravated by his hideous wounds.

Immediately he took my head in his mouth and began to crush it. It caused me indescribable agony. More from instinct than design I pushed my right arm between his jaws and dragged my head out. He put his teeth through my wrist, smashing it as easily as an eggshell. At this time I thought I was "all in." I felt quite sure my skull was pierced and about every bone in my face

⁴³⁹ Christie's story is also exemplified and explained by the works of Robert Service. See, for example, Robert Service, "The Law of the Yukon," in *Songs of a Sourdough* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907), 9. Archive.org <https://archive.org/stream/songssourdough00servuoft#page/8/> (11 Aug 2017). Christie's story is also akin to that of Hugh Glass, the legendary American frontiersman whose legend was recently adapted to make *The Revenant*. Like Christie's in the Canadian example, Glass' legend "was a great story and it cohered with an American vision of the West. Through this encounter with wild nature, men's bodies were changed and became something else. They were no longer European or British – they were American." Jon T Coleman quoted in, Horatia Harrod, "Best served cold: the terrifying true story behind The Revenant," *The Telegraph Film*, 29 Feb 2016. *The Telegraph Film* <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/2016/04/14/best-served-cold-the-terrifying-true-story-behind-the-revenant/> (11 Aug 2017).

⁴⁴⁰ JM Christie, "The World's Biggest Bear Story," *The Vancouver Province*, June 17th 1933, 31(2)-28.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

broken. In his death throes the bear set his teeth in the flesh of my thigh. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of that struggle.⁴⁴³

Christie uses the phrase in currency to describe battle fatigue at the front. To be “all in” was to be incapable of further fighting. When this occurred, it usually meant men choosing to return to the safety of their last fortified position to be evacuated. Again, as we so often see, immediately after saying that it was impossible to convey a sense of the truth of those moments, Christie tries: “The hot breath of the infuriated beast, maddened by his wounds, poured into my face — now streaming with blood — and almost blinded me. There was nothing left for me but to match my enfeebled endurance against that of my powerful, but dying antagonist.”⁴⁴⁴ Christie’s article, written in 1933, was a perfect metaphor for what the battalion experienced during the war, where Christie met quite a few “powerful, but dying antagonists” at the front.

The bear was the closest he had ever been to death: “Had he lasted another second, I could not possibly have survived, and, as it was, I expected that death at any moment would release me from my agonies. After what seemed an eternity, I felt his muscles finally slacken and freed myself.”⁴⁴⁵ The damage was terrible, and here Christie’s story of epic survival began. Administering rudimentary first aid on himself (tying his jacket around his head to keep his scalp and jaw in roughly the right place), Christie managed to hobble his way back to a nearby trapper’s cabin despite terrible gashes in his legs. He wrote a note that was “smeared with blood” and written left-handed in blood with “the bullet-end of a cartridge.”⁴⁴⁶ It read, “Dear George — I am all in, but will try to reach camp. Will keep to the river. You will find a dead grizzly near our cache. Goodbye! Jim.”⁴⁴⁷ Amazingly, if Christie is remembering correctly, he still started the note with “Dear George.” Chrissfield did find the note, and followed the

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

blood trail until he found Christie, whom Chrissfield mistook “for an Indian.” He lit a lamp, “pulled the robe from Christie’s head, and staggered back crying ‘Oh, my God, Jim’ over and over again.”⁴⁴⁸ Three years later, after a perilous journey, multiple surgeries and a convalescence spent mostly in Victoria and Winnipeg, he decided that he was still fit enough to take a hand in stopping the Germans, and that his what he had learned from the bear could apply to the Germans. He made up his mind to lie about his age and enlist in the Patricia’s.⁴⁴⁹

In Christie’s survival, we find some of the practical and spiritual lessons with which he went to the war, and which allowed him to account for so many German lives. The importance of maintaining the accuracy of rifle sights while transporting them through adverse conditions appears to be the most important practical lesson that he took out of the incident. Chrissfield remembered that a chance encounter with some timber wolves, which he fired at but missed: “This... was the means later of saving his life, as he noticed after missing the wolf that his rifle, which he had packed for some time through the scrub without using it, had the sights improperly adjusted. He stopped at once and fixed them and then proceeded on his way.”⁴⁵⁰ In his brief notes for teaching snipers their occupation, Christie refers twice to the absolute necessity of testing one’s rifle, and taking care of the sights: “To test rifle for accuracy have comfortable position with rest at 100 yards Should get five shots into 3 in circle with open sights. Test rifle at every opportunity.”⁴⁵¹ He makes the point again in his summation, which is sub-headed “Essentials for Sniper Accuracy in sights – aim – let off – Care *of rifle* sights: Extreme care must be taken of – never start sniping without testing rifle and sights.”⁴⁵² In hindsight, it seems imprudent to go after a grizzly bear without first checking one’s sights, but such was Jim’s innocence in 1911. The

⁴⁴⁸ Chrissfield quoted in, “Christie Fights a Yukon Bear,” 2, 31(28)-2. See also, James Bryce, “1911: a record grizzly fight,” *Outdoor Life* (Feb. 1998). C.H. Gibbons, “Jim Christie and the Bear,” *The Wide World Magazine*: April 1911, 156, no. 26 (London: 1911).

⁴⁴⁹ On overage soldiers see, Holt, “Filling the Ranks,” 1:170-1.

⁴⁵⁰ Bryce, “1911: A Record Grizzly Fight,” 48.

⁴⁵¹ Christie, “Ruby Diary,” 1 Mar 1916.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

wolf's survival may have been the bear's downfall. Both taught Christie a lesson he would apply to hunting the even more dangerous German enemy he faced during the war, a lesson he passed on to others during his tenure with the PPCLI. The bear had allowed Christie to enter the war with the right professional mindset to kill the enemy. We also see the way that the bear inured Christie to suffering in pursuit of his job. As good soldiers should, he strove to be as comfortable as possible as often as possible: "Everything possible [should] be done for comfort [of the] battalion snipers" he wrote.⁴⁵³ But this provision for their comfort out of the line was in recompense for the danger and discomfort they faced in and around it. They were perhaps more directly in the line of fire than anyone on the battlefield, (other than their unlucky victims). To achieve success in their work required extreme patience and steadfastness. Thus, the positions had to be as comfortable as possible: "have posts comfortable with rifle rest and room to stretch."⁴⁵⁴

Christie, who would patiently provide himself with a position that was as comfortable as possible, was perhaps unsurpassed in his ability to remain perfectly motionless. As Niven wrote,

He would lie out in the open behind our trenches, day after day ... and get his sight on some part of the enemy trench and wait for someone to put his head up. If he did not put it up today, he would be there tomorrow, and sure enough some German would come to that spot, and Christie would get him. This happened year after year. I have never known anyone outside an Indian who had the patience of Christie. He would concentrate hour after hour on one spot. No white man that I know of can concentrate for more than say, three hours on one spot.⁴⁵⁵

His ability to stay still, under any climatic circumstance is testament to his being all but completely inured to physical discomfort due to the bear attack.

Considering some of the positions that Christie is known to have sniped from, it is hard to see how he made himself comfortable, but he did manage to move into position and lay unseen until the

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 22 Feb 1916.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 10 Feb 1916.

⁴⁵⁵ Niven, "Jim Christie," 31(53.1)-9.

enemy showed his hand on myriad occasions.⁴⁵⁶ R.G. Barclay has it that in 1918, the final year of the war and one in which Lieutenant Christie was only able to serve at the front for about a month, he was still able to fight and win duels against enemy snipers in retaliation for attacks on his own troops. When word reached them of a sergeant being shot in the neck, Christie and Barclay hurried to the spot whence emanated the call for stretcher-bearers.

Jim, who was particularly interested in the path of the bullet, questioned the sentry, studied the ground in front through a periscope, and then returned to his headquarters. He was back in an hour, carrying his rifle and dressed for a crawl in no-man's land. The sentries were warned, and out he went through a sap which was only manned at night. Although I was watching through a periscope, only once did I see any movement to indicate his progress. An hour went by, and then there was the ping of a bullet from the hidden German sniper as it hit the back of our trench, followed almost immediately by the crack of Jim's rifle. From the ruins of a house over to our right, there slowly toppled the body of the German who had fired his last shot. An hour later Jim returned the way he had come.⁴⁵⁷

The scene, as portrayed by Barclay, harkens to myriad movie depictions of war that saw dead men "topple" through windows. His description, then, could conceivably be an embellishment based on more recently consumed tropes (Hollywood portrayals of war presented at home to warriors who were steadily losing their grasp on the real experiences they underwent), or it could be a statement of fact and Barclay could in fact have seen the sniper topple out of the ruins of a building. We know, for example, that Christie sniped from houses on some occasions.⁴⁵⁸

Barclay's description elaborates upon the theory of sniping that Christie outlines in his notebook. He had seen that there was a sniper who needed to be killed, to avenge the loss of men like the sergeant and to prevent further loss amongst his comrades. After conducting a thorough, unobserved reconnaissance, he had retired to consult the maps and air photos of the front, as well as

⁴⁵⁶ It might be pointed out, as Orwell does, that Christie (like every other soldier on the battlefield) was also lousy while lying perfectly motionless: "Glory of war, indeed! In war all soldiers are lousy, at least when it is warm enough. The men who fought at Verdun, at Waterloo, at Flodden, at Senlac, at Thermopylae – every one of them had lice crawling over his testicles." George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Harcourt, (1952) 1980), 76.

⁴⁵⁷ RG Barclay quoted in, Zubkowski, *Faith and Freedom*, 302. See also, R.G. Barclay, "Memoirs," 31(29)-1.

⁴⁵⁸ The toppling itself does seem suspicious, considering that snipers should fire from behind a loophole in the prone position, one where it is rather hard to "topple" from.

question anyone with knowledge of the ground and the enemy's fortifications. He had made a plan, returned and executed it. It was a model of battle procedure. Christie, after waiting an appropriate amount of time, returned to friendly lines and his duties as sniper officer.

Christie killed prodigiously while at the front. In an interview with Niven, his old friend and fellow officer remembered Christie's prowess on the battlefield as a continuation of what he had learned in the north: "He never wasted a shot. A shot or a bullet in the Klondike by yourself up in the mountains was a pretty precious thing. You didn't waste it. He killed a German every day of his life."⁴⁵⁹ The key to his ability to take the lives of the Germans was his ability to remain motionless, detached from the physical discomfort of being perfectly still: "he never moved. He could lay and look through that hole there for twelve hours with his rifle. No other white man could do it. If you tried, you'd move over to that hole. Or that one over there... And all a German had to do was come [into] that little dip in the trench, 200 yards away and he was a dead man. He never survived. Christie did that."⁴⁶⁰ Like Papineau, Niven believed that the best snipers, and the style of warfare they encountered in incidental fighting, required a skill-set akin to that of First Nations' hunters, and the qualities then associated with "savage" man: patience, the ability to focus unflinchingly for hours and hours at a time, and utter indifference to one's own suffering when the situation demanded it. Note also that Niven is reinforcing the workmanlike way Germans were killed.

By October 1915, Christie felt confident enough in his men, himself, and his knowledge of No Man's Land to attempt to entrap a large group of Germans. He spent long periods between the trench lines, especially at night, and learned to anticipate the movements of the enemy. The war diary records are precise as to the tactics employed by Christie in challenging a vastly larger patrol on the German side of No Man's Land. Christie led a group of eight snipers and two grenadiers through a marsh to the

⁴⁵⁹ Niven, "Story of Jim Christie," 2.

⁴⁶⁰ "Interview with Niven, L.Col. Hugh DSO & Bar MC," National Archives of Canada, 1962, 31(28)-2.

German side of No Man's Land, concealing themselves at a position that Christie had chosen for an ambush.

Just after dusk a strong German Patrol came down the road, (consisting of 30 men under an officer) marching in fours and with a flanking party in the marsh. Sgt. Christie seeing himself hopelessly outnumbered and in danger of being cut off between the two parties resorted to bluff and ordered the Germans to "Hands up." The enemy not complying, our men opened rapid fire, the grenadiers at the same time throwing their bombs into the midst of the close mass of men in the road. The Germans threw themselves down and returned the fire of our men while the flanking party closed up. Our two right hand men faced around to meet them and one of our men killed a German who had come within a couple of yards of him. The enemy after throwing 2 or 3 bombs which did no damage began to crawl away, leaving several dead and some wounded men groaning in the road. Fearing a return of the enemy... Sgt. Christie took the opportunity of with drawing, his whole party returning to our lines without a casualty.⁴⁶¹

Christie's knowledge of the ground allowed him to select a spot that he could fight off an attack and counter-attack with small arms and bombs. According to Niven, after the Germans had not accepted Christie's invitation to raise their hands, he shot the officer to decapitate the patrol while they were still surprised. After winning the short battle, Christie had gone through the officer's uniform for papers, cut off shoulder straps for identification and returned to friendly lines without a casualty. Niven remembers how, even then, the patrol leader's work was not finished: "Christie was in a state of consternation. He found that his patrol had pinched the German rifles and two of his men had left their own. Christie asked Sir George for permission to go out and get the rifles as he was responsible. The General's face was a study, but he gave permission and he awarded Christie an immediate [Distinguished Conduct Medal] DCM."⁴⁶² Thorough-going attention to detail, trades-craft, and professionalism proved unfortunate for the German party that Christie had ambushed.

Throughout, killing tended to be remembered (especially during the war) in a sporting vein. Ambushes and raids were a part of life at the front, and men needed to always be conversant with the

⁴⁶¹ "Pte [A. G. S.] Fleming did splendid work with his bombs, remaining behind with Sgt. Christie to cover the retreat of the remainder." "PPCLI War Diaries 1914-19," 7 October 1915.

⁴⁶² "Interview with Niven," 31(28)-2.

lay of the land in front of, in, and behind their lines of fortification. Stanley Livingston Jones, an officer intimately concerned with his duties to kill the enemy, also remembers the raid in which Christie won his DCM. Jones has it that the reconnaissance patrol, which was sent out through grass during the day, was seen by the enemy who decided to send out one or two platoons to deal with the raiders: platoons that were decimated under Christie's command. Upon the successful return of the raid, Jones sums up larger attitudes towards killing at the front for himself and his men: "The Brigadier and Divisional General were greatly amused and tickled over the show – *just a little of the hunting fighting we all like and get so little of.* [Emphasis added]"⁴⁶³

Christie remained in the line throughout much of the remainder of 1915, being promoted to lance-corporal in September, just prior to the raid. His DCM and Mention-in-Despatches of Field Marshal Sir J.D.P. French were both published in early 1916. Christie was promoted to lance-sergeant in June. He came up for leave in June and was back with the battalion in July, in time for Sanctuary Wood. This was despite the fact that, in April, Christie had a close call with a shell, "which blew in parapet and buried me. Shell passed within inches of head."⁴⁶⁴ He never fully recovered from the effects of the shell, perhaps psychologically as much as physically. In June, prior to his leave, he was treated at the divisional rest station for three days before returning to the battalion. He initially stayed out of the firing line for six days to recuperate from headaches. At the end of July, he was wounded by a gunshot to the chest, and the same month he was sent back to England where he remained until October 1916 when granted a furlough to Canada. He remained out of the line until his return from Canada in February and then remained in England in various roles, training soldiers with the 7th Reserve Battalion, acting as a Quarter Master Sergeant (QMS), and orderly. He did not make it back to the battalion in France until October 1917, just in time for the Canadian role in the Passchendaele offensive, where he (true to form) won the

⁴⁶³ S.L. Jones, "Two Years in the Trenches," 111.

⁴⁶⁴ Christie, "Ruby Diary," 15 Feb 1916.

MC. The citation for his award tells of Christie working in both the capacity of a firer, and an information carrier, the latter role as important to the conduct of battle as the former.

Lt. James Murdoch Christie, Inf. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an attack. He made three separate journeys through an intense artillery and machine-gun barrage, bringing back valuable information. He also took part in hard fighting round the enemy strong points, and by his initiative and recourse accounted for several of the enemy. His courageous conduct was an inspiration to all, and assisted materially in the success of the operation.⁴⁶⁵

In November, shortly after Passchendaele, he was granted leave, commissioned, and, in March 1918, given leave in England to receive his MC. He rejoined the Battalion in April but went down with influenza shortly thereafter, never to return to the trenches.

The central ethos of the Patricia's, and of Jim Christie, was to kill as many Germans as possible. Writing a short description of the duties of the sniper in the line, Christie lists just two: "1) To Kill Huns 2)] Must only snipe (no other duties)[.] Sniping officer and N.C.O. should instruct and oversee, collect information and find best locations for sniping."⁴⁶⁶ (The men of the scout/sniper section as a whole had many other duties, especially in being used as guides during reliefs, those of the sniper himself while on a tour of front-line duty were to be strictly limited).The qualities that Christie was looking for in the men that he chose to include in Patricia's sniper platoon were, "1) intelligence 2) good shot 3) resolute 4) Patient 5) Tireless 6) Truthful."⁴⁶⁷ All around good chaps, but – more importantly – good shots were what was needed. They should work and live "in pairs usually chums if possible. Batt. Snipers should all live together to enable to compare notes."⁴⁶⁸ Christie lists the name of every man in his platoon at the time of writing. We thus are equipped with a plethora of leads in the effort to discover how men recorded their experiences of killing on the Western Front.

⁴⁶⁵ "Lt. James Murdoch Christie" MC Citation, *London Gazette*, 25 April 1918, #30651 Pg. 5021. <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/30651/supplement/5021> (11 Aug 2017).

⁴⁶⁶ Christie, "Ruby Diary," 18 Feb 1916.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 22 Feb 1916.

When we analyze the diary's record of the daily and nightly grind of the sniper section upon entering a new line of trenches, we can begin to see why he daily (during convalescence in England) snapped awake at "3-4 AM regardless of time of retirement."⁴⁶⁹ "Started men off at 3:50 AM to fix up loop holes. Report having got 2 good positions overlooking enemy trenches also having seen 4 Bosches."⁴⁷⁰ Throughout his front-line service, Christie's occupation carried him into and around No Man's Land, usually at night. Sniper positions were not just happenstances of the ground – although they were that as well; they were constructed, riveted, camouflaged and fortified positions. Christie gives us eleven different examples of how loophole positions could be camouflaged in his notes.

Presumably he would have constructed them as teaching aids behind the lines:

No. 1 loophole covered with sacking and dummy sandbags sown in outside No. 2. Empty sand bag loose over hole with wire attached to mouth of sack to form ring to shoot through. observation hole through ham tin for telescope. No. 3. Same as No. 2 with natural earth cover No. 4. Through broken rum jug. No. 5. Loop plate on ground level with sod covering. Observation hole just behind and higher. No. 6. Beef tin for loop hole and barb wire hide. No. 7. Dummy Sand bags 18 inches from top of parapet No. 8. Plate in rear [jam] tin inside a sand bag for loop hole. No. 9 Sliding double loop hole plates No. 10. Hole through sand bags under parapet No. 11. Ordinary l[oop]hole covered with empty sand bags.⁴⁷¹

Camouflage was all-important in Christie's line of work. Sandbags were the most ubiquitous piece of the sniper's camouflage kit, and rifle barrels were to be painted khaki, and the face painted and or covered.⁴⁷² Tins, the means by which the British Army supplied its troops with food, were also used. Movements "should be carried out slowly and with extreme care," time of day and weather were important factors. Wet days were no good for sniping, "gas from rifle will show. Especially in slight mist [or] drizzle [sic]" but not on a dry day, and "sun when behind back and shining into enemy faces good thing for sniping when vice versa leave them alone."⁴⁷³ This means that, due to the cardinal realities of

⁴⁶⁹ "Medical History," Service File, LAC.

⁴⁷⁰ Christie, "Ruby Diary," 16 Apr 1916.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 25 Jan 1916.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

the Western Front, German snipers tried to take life at dawn and British soldiers at sunset. Certain types of .303 ammunition were less reliable, and the bullets were marked with a letter that could be used to identify bad lots, "defects in ammunition... to be avoided on account of flame and residue marked G.B. and N. all bad for sniping... A good[,] E and R, L also good."⁴⁷⁴ Precision was all important to firing and surviving.

Christie was intimately involved in the process of training men to kill, and his experiences allowed him to pass on specific and deadly tactical knowhow. His lecture notes on "Night Sniping" for example demonstrate how much he had learned during dozens of trips into and out of No Man's Land.

Valuable for getting information re: Enemy units etc., good for demoralizing morale of enemy[.]
Good night sights 1 Radium sight 2 Aperture [sic] sight 3 French Sight 4 Low power telescope.
Night sniper's targets. Patrols Sentries Working Parties (dangerous to stalk listening posts)
Enemy listening posts usually posted late (get out early!) In a fog is good time for sniping.
Always aim low when shooting in fog.⁴⁷⁵

It was all about mastering the elements and shooting effectively in every possible situation. Similarly, Christie gives detailed instruction on the construction of Rifle Batteries, a weapons system also outlined as an effective way to apply rifle fire by Talbot Papineau.

Rifles must be set accurately frame must be level from side to side and firmly fixed on rigid base range from 200 to 2500 yards the greater the range the greater must be the [target] fired at. Targets Gap in parapet II) Trench or Communication Trenches that can be enfiladed III) Farm and other building it is always advisable to drop a few shots into dumps trench tramways tracks roads and cross-roads. Systematic straffing [sic] of all places where enemy move about without cover from fire.⁴⁷⁶

The goal he outlines was to unobtrusively find the enemy's weak points, and then systematically target them. Christie's first concern was always with the camouflage and safety of his own position and the comfort of his men, but only in so far as those factors *increased* the ability of the same men to take enemy life and demoralize their garrison.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 26 Feb 1916.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 1 Mar 1916.

It is interesting to note that he only began his diary after being seriously shaken and wounded by the close proximity blast of a high explosive shell, his first entry describing the near miss: "Spent day in firing line. Saw a good many bosches on left front from 450 to 550 yards. Had good sport in A.M. Went south to trench 70 in P.M... Investigate reported sniper's position. Had close call from high explosive shell which blew in parapet and buried me got [quite] severe bash on head which made me quite sick and dopey for several hours."⁴⁷⁷ What followed was a terse but accurate picture of Christie's war. Importantly, when describing taking life he specifically refers to it as "sport," meaning that the skills he applied at the Western Front were not wholly different than those applied to the game animals he had sought out in Canada. Of course, Christie was recording the actual act of sniping, a profession he still found sporting, as compared to the war generally and its unceasing delivery of death and destruction that ultimately broke him. The language of gamesmanship and sports continued to inform his discussion of killing even if he understood that the war was a crushing monotony of danger.⁴⁷⁸ Also, it is likely that he was wounded in retaliation for his efforts on the day, and the "sport" that he had earlier in the day. As the bear's attack was retribution for his caching meat in a hungry world, so – likely – was the concussive blows he sustained in revenge for the death of friends and countrymen.

Christie was in the front-line, actively sniping for three out of the eight days that he made diary entries.⁴⁷⁹ Killing was part of his daily routine, or at least his weekly routine while at the front. For example, on the 17th of April he was active all day, "shot at hun in front of crater; also had some shooting on left front from post in rear of Crater. Located and shot at snipers from Trench 70. Was

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 16 Apr 1916.

⁴⁷⁸ Roper argues that "gamesmanship" could not survive the war in an unaltered form, and points to increasing self-reflectiveness on the part of veterans. But he ends his paper with a quote that seems to fit Christie's mindset and way of dealing with the war. Quoting the Second World War veteran William Slim, "I suppose if I had been one of those wartime subalterns who have since written so prolifically and pathologically of their reactions to such scenes, I should have psychoanalysed myself into a desperate gloom, swallowed half a bottle of whisky, and laughed bitterly. But I had never heard of psychoanalysis, I had not seen whisky for a fortnight, and if I laughed it was from anything but bitterness." Roper, "Between Manliness and Masculinity," 359.

⁴⁷⁹ Although the diary is full of notes, only eight days are given specific diary entries. The remainder of the notebook is filled with his lecture notes, his men's names and groupings, and other miscellany.

called on to take part in bombing raid which was cancelled on account of light.”⁴⁸⁰ Whereas Niven claims that he “never wasted shot” Christie himself is more circumspect, describing shooting “at” the enemy as opposed to decisively recording hits. Christie also notes the successes of his men in the diary, “Flintoft and Crofts report getting 2 bosche. [M]iserable day in trenches.”⁴⁸¹ He records the presence of enemy snipers with a sense of personal duty, as it was primarily his section’s responsibility to silence the enemy’s sharpshooters within the battalion frontage: “Sniper still at same place but does not show himself anymore,” and later, “enemy snipers very industrious.”⁴⁸² Christie, having outlasted a bear in a struggle of endurance, almost at the expense of his whole life’s blood, was now intimately engaged in defeating the only animal more dangerous to humans when angered, other humans. The war seemed to have given Christie a new lease on life.

The sport inherent to his occupation, a sport that had also been a large part of his pre-war occupation, eventually damaged him worse than the bear had. By the middle of April, Christie was just about all in, sidelined with migraine headaches for days at a time “Stayed in dugout all day. Head still aching from effect of shock... 3 enemy observed in balloon up in evening east of my position. Fairly quiet in trenches, men report having had some shooting. Fair.”⁴⁸³ Not long after writing these words, Christie was wounded by a gun-shot to the chest, and evacuated to England for a period of convalescence, having survived another grave wound to rise again and fight another day.

Christie’s diary also serves as more restrained testimony regarding the job of the sniper than one tends to read in the somewhat hyperbolic accounts of his prowess (“If Jim Christie cut a notch for every German he got, he would need a totem pole”⁴⁸⁴). He was not firing every day, although he was constantly on the lookout for an advantageous spot to begin firing from. He was careful to be absolutely

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 17 Apr 1916.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 18 Apr 1916.

⁴⁸³ Ibid. 15 Apr 1916 (date struck out, likely a later entry).

⁴⁸⁴ Niven, “The Story of Jim Christie,” 3.

certain of his target, and held the security of his position as a higher priority than firing. When new positions were constructed, they were to be avoided “for one day at least after construction.”

Particularly good posts were not to be used on a damp day, dummies should be kept away from the sniping point, and, when a post was discovered, “quit it.”⁴⁸⁵ Preserving the security of the post was more important, in the long run, than the life of any individual rifleman. Of course, the purpose of all these countermeasures was ultimately to carry on with his primary responsibility, and live to do it the next day and the next etc.

He lists some thirty-four individual sniper/observers under his command, essentially a light platoon’s worth of men. The PPCLI’s was twice as large as the “establishment” put down by Hesketh-Prichard for contemporary battalions of the BEF that was only “16 privates with two N.C.O.’s under an officer.”⁴⁸⁶ The Patricia’s would field twice the number of trained and equipped “accurate shots” on their battalion frontage than was fielded by an equivalent battalion of the BEF: four full sections, in the Patricia’s case, two of which were commanded by a sergeant, with an officer in overall command.

Their identities are readily available, unlike many of the men who make up Munroe’s account. Of the total, twenty-four survived the war, ten were killed in action or died of wounds. Of the survivors, half (twelve) were invalided at some point before the end of the war, and seven men were struck off strength to other units. Seven of the men in the section were granted a commission like Christie; three became officers in the PPCLI, and four others transferred to the Engineers, the 7th Canadian Trench Mortar Battery, and the Royal Air Force. Some of the men transferred to other units of the CEF, like Edward Llewellyn who became a Corporal in the 3rd Divisional Signals. They shared in winning seven medals, including one Victoria Cross (VC) by Sergeant George Harry Mullin, a private when Christie recorded his name. It is certainly an exceptional group, but it was really no different than what Herbert

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 10 Feb 1916.

⁴⁸⁶ H. Hesketh-Prichard, *Sniping in France: With Notes on the Scientific Training of Scouts, Observers and Snipers* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1920), 54.

Wes McBride called “an average bit of the long fringe of British soldiers who were at that time holding back the flower of the German Army.”⁴⁸⁷ The PPCLI snipers were well led at every level, and had been chosen for their musketry skills from the wider ranks of the PPCLI to serve in a *corps d’élite*. They were men who proved capable of learning war’s hard lessons, and becoming proficient, professional killers.

In George Bryce’s account we see the depth and immediacy of the memory of the war, a memory that makes the loss of a comrade as traumatic thirty years later as the death of a loved one in the immediate past. “Those MacGill[sic] University, men who took commission, such as Barney Lobson, and others, I can’t remember names, *but I can still see them all*. I seem to be writing so much, so many things crowd into my head. [Emphasis added]”⁴⁸⁸ Bryce came overseas with the 500 draft, and billeted with the snipers through several years of the war. His correspondence was implored by Bastedo; “Since you joined the Batt. In France on Mar 11/15 and were not struck of strength until Mar. 20/19 you must have an unusual fund of first hand info that would be of interest to all P.P.’s, their relatives and friends... Please tell us what you have to tell in your own words in your own way.”⁴⁸⁹ He replied with a sixteen-page letter which detailed his war service. Describing the “apex of the Ypres Salient” when the Battle of Sanctuary Wood began (June 1916), “I saw a German with a big box periscope, taking stock of our trenches. Soon after, they sent over 2 rockets with streamers hanging from them. Battle commenced, Hoey and me, to[ok] up [position in?] shell hole, just back from front-line trench, we had some good shooting at [G]ermans.”⁴⁹⁰ Both Bryce and Hoey are named in Christie’s diary. Bryce’s narrative is instructive in the ways that men remember war, as immediate and horrible but filled with pride in comradeship. His discussion of killing Germans is as hedged as Christie’s, and he presents his service with the PPCLI much more in terms of preserving friendly lives (chief amongst them one’s own), as

⁴⁸⁷ Herbert W. McBride, *A Rifleman Went to War* (Plantersville: Small-Arms Technical Publishing Company, 1935), 48. For more on McBride see below, pg. 176-178.

⁴⁸⁸ J.E. Brice, “Memories of the 500 draft,” 12, 31(7)-2.

⁴⁸⁹ W.E. Bastedo to J.E. Brice, 11 May 1964, 2-3, *ibid*.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid*., 6.

opposed to taking the lives of the enemy. He stresses his position as an observer throughout, but makes it clear that, when the chips were down, during the moments between barrages as the enemy infantry advanced, he was ready and willing to carry on a brisk fire (“some good shooting”) at the Germans.

Bryce also points out that any movement, even to the “safety” of rear areas, was intensely dangerous. His sniper-partner Hoey was grazed in the cheek by a bullet that “came between us.” Hoey, a twenty-seven-year-old former rancher born in Brandon, tried his best to make it back to the safety of the rear but “I heard he got hit many times.” His medical records indicate that he was only hit once on the return trip, but he was nevertheless invalidated home due to complete deafness in his right ear (that had been shot off).⁴⁹¹

Bryce stresses that even company men had the freedom to follow, forward or backwards, interpreting the “last order” that he had received.⁴⁹² Describing his first entry into the trenches during the chaotic battles around St. Eloi in March 1916, his narrative unconsciously begins to confuse tense, past and present becoming entwined: “Although I am following the man in front of me, still in the dark. We are in No Man’s Land although I did not know it, at the time.”⁴⁹³ His first night in the trenches, Bryce took part in an attack during the chaotic fighting at St. Eloi. He “got the word to charge,” but “we had hardly got to our feet when Captain Clarke was killed, right there. Next order I heard was to retire to trenches, so I followed those who knew where they were.”⁴⁹⁴ Here we see the tendency of soldiers to view the fighting on the Western Front as a negotiated and somewhat voluntary affair, especially outside of the big offensive battles. Of course, they were bound to follow the orders of their officer, but after he was killed, the men taking part in the attack realized that to press it further would be suicide

⁴⁹¹ William Henry Hoey (51197), Service Record, RG150, box 4418, file 58, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=468072> (26 Aug 2017).

⁴⁹² As we will see, Draycot also “followed the last order” given by a superior officer, no matter who that might be, while moving forward into the maelstrom at Mount Sorrell/Sanctuary Wood.

⁴⁹³ Bryce, “Memories of the 500 Draft,” 4.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

and beat an unceremonious retirement for the relative safety of the front-line. Bryce, new to the trenches, was content to follow those with more experience. If they had pressed on the attack, likely he would have too. His most important survival mechanism was his ability to follow the men “who knew where they were.”⁴⁹⁵ At St. Eloi, the crowd of soldiers dispersed to safety, whereas at Vimy, Lens, or Passchendaele, or the terrific fighting during the Hundred Days, the crowd pressed forward to take its objectives. The difference was only in context.

Bryce points out how activities other than fighting are often more dangerous, difficult, and important than applying rifle fire. The goal was to provoke fights only when they could be won, and it was not cowardice to retreat from overwhelming odds *if the order was given to do so* or the situation was so dire that nothing else could be attempted. When a shell dropped short on top of the lines held by the Canadians, (“next bay to the one I was in”) a volunteer was called for to retire to HQ and report the shorts to the battalion. The volunteer was Corporal Sam Hacking, who was awarded the DCM for his actions.⁴⁹⁶ Note that, in both Brice’s and Christie’s narrative, firing at the enemy was not seen as anything particularly heroic, merely matter of course; the act of volunteering, on the other hand, entailed wholly different dangers, and was more important to conduct of the battle than anything Corporal Hacking could have done in the fire trenches themselves. He makes the point again when speaking about his participation as a sniper/artillery observer for the regiment during the Battle of Vimy Ridge: “I remember one of our artillery officers and his signaller standing in full view on the parapet of the German line on the Ridge. The officer had his binoculars jammed to his eyes and he was calmly giving his signaller the range for the big guns behind him, so they could keep the enemy on the run.”⁴⁹⁷ The heroic thing had not been the actual firing at the enemy, but the man putting himself in danger to pass information along to those who could do a better job of it.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid. See also, S. Hacking to W.E. Bastedo, “Correspondence,” 31(19)-6.

⁴⁹⁷ “Vimy By the Man Who Won’t be There,” *The Star*, (unknown city), July 24 1936, 2, 31(7)-2.

Bryce describes his experiences during the fight for Polygon Wood just prior to Frezenburg in a similar fashion to the stories told about Christie. They watched the Germans mass, waited until they got within rifle range and “held them down awhile” until they “got their artillery up, ‘boy! Didn’t they give us hell!”⁴⁹⁸ At Frezenburg Bryce was wounded badly enough to keep him out of the war for almost a year. Hit “between the spine and the shoulder blade” by the nose cap of an artillery shell, Bryce convalesced for a year before returning to the battalion and the sniper section. Throughout he refers to the battles with the understated phrase, “quite a do.” Others called them shows, but Bryce settled on “a do.”

The former Patricia sniper A.R. Jones, like others including Walter Draycot, intimates that during one night patrol to check the wire he and his partner abandoned their only weapons as a hindrance. Believing their rifles too clumsy for the sneaky work required of a trip through No Man’s Land, they carried only a “couple of Mills bombs in our pockets” and recalls being nervous about “the pins coming out as we crawled over the ground.”⁴⁹⁹ Jones’ and his partner Smith’s job that night was to check the damage to the wire prior to the attack on Regina Trench at the Somme, “nowhere could we find a break or opening.”⁵⁰⁰ Eventually, becoming disoriented in the dark, the pair “held a whispered consultation... [and] decided to get rid of the bombs which were only hampering us.”⁵⁰¹ The decision to abandon their only weapons turned out to be a good one, as a friend, Arthur Milne (who also later served with the snipers), had ventured out to look for the patrol which had been delayed. Hearing the splash of the bombs in shell-hole water he called out to the pair and returned them to safety. Their job that night was not actually to take life, except in the aggregate. It was to provide information as to where the attacking troops could get through the German wire, information which unfortunately proved not to exist.

⁴⁹⁸ Bryce, “Memories of the 500 Draft,” 5.

⁴⁹⁹ A.R. Jones to W.E. Bastedo, “P.P.C.L.I. For Memories and Tales,” undated typescript, 2, 31(27)-7.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

However, the fact that the wire stood relatively unblemished ultimately failed to save the lives of the attacking troops as, “in spite of the wire being uncut, and the ground very wet, the Brigade attacked Regina Trench the next morning with unfortunate results.”⁵⁰² Again we see the dimensions of killing on the Western Front, and how Jones had felt perfectly free to discard his weapons as a hindrance during a truly dangerous job that ultimately was designed to facilitate killing during the brigade’s attack the following day. The tactics were often left to the individual.

Jones, who was eventually commissioned from the ranks, recalled that it was the swank of the Patricia’s (swank condoned and encouraged by the founder Hamilton Gault) that was to separate and perpetuate them as an elite unit. Gault, speaking to the men going on leave to England, told them, “Remember, a private in the Patricia’s is to so conduct himself and feel, that he is the equal of a colonel in any other unit.”⁵⁰³ This idea echoes through the memoirs of veterans, especially long after the war. They had been part of an elite group of war-fighters and were expected to comport themselves to a higher standard than anyone else in the CEF, and BEF. This idea proved effective in motivating men to stick it, and kill Germans during the war, as Christie, Jones and Bryce had all done. Jones points out that each of the men in the sniper section was “outstanding” in his own way, and reminds us of the fact that Christie was not the only one on the hop to shoot the enemy: “*Jim Christie... was a small man... Except on parade, he always carried his rifle with the muzzle down, in his own special way. Bill Elder, a quiet man, tried to set a record for sniping Germans from the Crater line posts before Vimy. Art Milne, a very good looking man, was irresistible to girls... Harry Mullin’s experiences would take pages to write about.*”⁵⁰⁴ Jones donated his rifle to the regimental museum having, “many long kilometers over roads of France and Belgium, as well as many trips in and out of the trenches.”⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., Jones to J.W. Miles, 3 Feb 1979, 2.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 1.

In his brief correspondence with Bastedo, Jones does much to separate himself from the killing. The rifle he donated was “carried” within him. Although he thus silently implies it was fired, he does not actually make the point. Similarly, when detailing the “variety of duties” the section undertook for the regiment, Jones strikes out the word “sniping” and replaces it with “manning sniping posts.”⁵⁰⁶ The posts themselves, and the men who manned them, are what are focused upon.

Men tended to remember their service with the snipers in terms of the freedom it afforded them, and the relative safety of their accommodations back of the lines. As Jack McLaren said, as a member of the sniper section, “you’ve got the run of the whole battalion front” and, as the men in charge of guiding the battalion into their positions, “we always chose the deepest dugouts there were.”⁵⁰⁷ Considering they were attached to the HQ this only stands to reason. McLaren remembers that he “liked” the freedom of being a sniper as “you are not confined to any small area of trench, you’ve got the run of your battalion front either the front-line or back in the supports you can go anywhere and everywhere you want to under direction, of course, of the sniping officer and sergeant.” Ultimately results mattered however, and these men would have to expose themselves to German fire. Christie’s occupation in the regiment brought him into close and continuous contact with the strange killing terrain of the Western Front, and he fired from in front of, inside, and behind the front-line parapets all over the Canadian sectors of the Western Front. This was equally true for his peers in the section, who ultimately became soldiers under his command.

We can clearly see that Christie was motivated to kill in large part due to his love for and responsibility to his comrades. As in Munroe’s case with Bobbie Burns, and Papineau’s with Bobs the terrier, we find in Christie’s story an animal affirming the humanity and lovability of men suffering the most extreme conceivable situations. During the moments before the jump off at Passchendaele – that

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ McLaren, J. - Entertainment Troupe – Interview, 117230 (ISN), CBC Radio: Flanders Fields, 23 Apr 1963, 35:30-38:20 LAC.

unique, ineluctable, and incommunicable moment that was the microcosm of the war for Canada, Christie did not remember sombre faces, or thoughts of the hereafter. As C.C. Robinson remembers Christie saying, “It’s funny what guys think of when there are only a few minutes to go, when a chap asked, ‘Sir, do you think a kitten can live on condensed milk?’ A stray had attached itself to the kind fellow who bought some condensed milk, and left the care of the kitten to a friend in the Transport Section. But that is far better than thinking and worrying about yourself.”⁵⁰⁸ Christie, like Munroe, furnishes us with a story that speaks to the love of humans for animals and for each other, and the fact that, during the pregnant moments before going Over the Top, men tended not to be thinking hateful thoughts even though they would soon kill or die as fate dictated. Passchendaele with all the murdering, the passing information, the barrage, the mud, the death, the machine guns, Mullin’s charge, through it all Robinson remembers Christie remembering the caring heart of one of the “kind fellows” in the battalion. It is impossible to know if the unnamed soldier survived Passchendaele, or is commemorated on the Menin Gate. The cat may have had better odds of surviving the week.

Christie’s example, and legend, together with that of his men highlights the true dimension of power on the Western Front, namely that men were often free to survive and fight as best they thought possible so long as they did it, especially if they got results and lived long enough to earn the trust of their superiors. In Christie’s example, we see that “much of the fighting was optional,” to use McBride’s phrase, for snipers and soldiers generally on the Western Front.⁵⁰⁹ Most men went long periods without seeing a German, but they were always aware of their presence. During incidental fighting especially, killing largely became a specialist affair. Men in companies still had killing jobs to perform, but things had reached a point by 1916 that men were being removed from the front-line trenches prior to commencing a strafe. The average man on “sentry-go” was usually perfectly content to live and let live,

⁵⁰⁸ Story told by Christie to C.C. Robinson quoted in, Zubkowski, *Faith and Freedom*, 294.

⁵⁰⁹ McBride, *Rifleman Went to War*, 92.

and could go long stretches, or even entire an entire career, without being forced into a situation where he would have to kill.⁵¹⁰ Christie's story further demonstrates that, contrary to the belief of many of those who write of the horror of the First World War, men are not automata, and they usually tried to work within the confines of the reality at hand to maximize the damage they could inflict upon the enemy and minimize the enemy's ability to do damage to them, and this was true, often to a lesser extent, of the company men of the regiment as well. For long stretches of "quiet periods" at the front, killing was (for the infantry) the special purview of the individual men and sharpshooters, the opposite of the rigid mass attack orders given for major battles like the Somme or Verdun. So long as they were employing themselves as best they could, battalion officers tended to give specialists wide latitude in the pursuance of their aim of killing the enemy.

During offensive battles, when battalions attempted to occupy the defended ground of the enemy, snipers still had a role to play, usually guiding the battalion to its jump-off points, and then remaining on the flanks and/or slightly behind the main attack lines, looking for opportunities to silence machine guns or anybody else they could see actively inflicting damage on one's own side. As Christie wrote, "Snipers should be in rear of Attacking party or on the flanks to act as covering party to keep down M.G. fire etc: after trench is taken snipers should be posted on flanks to cover barriers."⁵¹¹ Conversely, one of the most important roles that snipers could fill was in the capacity of delivering accurate information as a scout/runner/guide. It is telling that Christie's MC citation stresses that he moved through the battle lines to deliver "valuable information" that was as important as any of the firing that he did during the battle. With SOS barrages inevitably cutting telephone cables as soon as the

⁵¹⁰ Robert Matthew Brown provides a good example of this. A Lewis Gunner with No. 1 Company (2 Platoon), Brown originally enlisted 207th Battalion and stayed behind in England as a batman for a few months before proceeding overseas to the Patricia's in November 1917. While at the front he suffered through three months of incidental fighting and learned to "keep his head down." He ends his letter simply, "No heroics, just plain mud slogging Pat." R.M Brown to Cole, 13 December 1975, 31(11)-2.

⁵¹¹ Christie, "Ruby Diary," 10 Feb 1916.

show kicked off, the passage of information to supporting forces behind the battle was as important, and as lethal.

Christie's medical history tells the story of the toll that the war took out of his body and mind as the war progressed. After the close call with a shell in April 1916, Christie was diagnosed with Cephalgia – clustered episodic migraines that came and went, and would leave him unable to move for days. He was also diagnosed with a sprained back and defective vision in May. His medical records indicate that he waited for six weeks before reporting to a dressing station. Again, Niven provides further details on the incident that may or may not be entirely accurate. He recalls that it was at Hooze where Christie was shelled, after picking off “several” Germans from a position behind a chimney in a barn. The Germans “raised hell,” and turned a full “battery” of guns onto the barn, blowing it up with Christie inside:

[T]hat afternoon I found him lying behind the HQ and he said he had an awful headache, I told him to go to the dressing station three miles back, he went and was examined and the Doctors told him he was slinging the lead and put him to carrying stretcher cases, so next day he came back and a couple of days later the Divisional Surgeon came up and I got him to see Christie who had his skull cracked in two places. Christie served with us for two more years but he would never go sick again for fear they would find those cracks.⁵¹²

Here we see the inversion of the normal doctor-patient relationship, where the military doctor, attempting to keep as many men in the line as possible, finds himself in the odd position of attempting to convince his patients that they are not sick or wounded.⁵¹³

No skull “cracks” were noted in Christie's medical history so the veracity of Niven's claim cannot be known, but by 1916 the Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre saw fit to invalid him home due to his

⁵¹² Niven, “Story of JM Christie, PPCLI,” 31(53.1)-9.

⁵¹³ On the doctor-patient relationship in the Canadian military see, Bill Rawling, *Death their Enemy: Canadian Medical Practitioners and War* (Quebec: AGMV Marquis, 2001), 74, 82-3. See also, Ana Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 8-12.

being “over-age,” “anaemic,” and having “failing eyesight.”⁵¹⁴ Christie did not want to leave the military, however, saying that “he did not want his discharge;” instead he was transferred back to the battalion.⁵¹⁵ After a long period of convalescence, where Christie was granted a furlough to Canada and bounced around various English commands, he was only sent back to the front after being granted a commission in August 1917.

Christie remained at the front for less than six months, being granted two leaves during that period (one for his MC investiture), and was eventually evacuated with influenza in April 1918. After being evacuated from the front, Lieutenant Christie sat before the medical board, and was given the respect of a front-line officer. The doctor noted his heavily scarred face. The war had aged him from the spry forty-seven-year-old who had joined the regiment in Ottawa, and instead he looked “fully his age given” which was then fifty-one. He had lied about his age to the recruiters in Ottawa, but apparently no longer felt the need to hide the truth. He was as old as the dominion that he helped define to itself. But by mid 1917, he presented the picture of a man broken by the war:

Impaired nervous system. Spasmodic attacks of dull pain in right temporal region occurring approximately every 2 or 3 weeks and lasting on each occasion 2 or three days. Tenderness in above region upon light tapping. Marked tremor in both hands. Knee reflexes considerably exaggerated Wakens at 3-4 every A.M. regardless of time of retirement. Occasionally becomes dizzy and almost falls.⁵¹⁶

It is fascinating insight into the hell of war that a man who had fought so successfully through so much of it, a keen-eyed sniper and perhaps the best shot of a regiment of good shots, had become a debilitated wreck. His hands shook with delirium tremens, the palsied shaking of an alcoholic. His

⁵¹⁴ “Examination by Standing Medical Board, Shorncliffe of Sgt JM Christie,” 31 Jul 1916, Service Record, RG150, box 1701, file 35, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=100542> (11 Aug 2017).

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid. “Medical Board Report on a Disabled Officer,” 6 Jul 1918.

vaunted eyesight was failing, and had failed as early as May 1916. His intense focus had become debilitating.⁵¹⁷

Christie is not remembered as a debilitated old man, physically and mentally exhausted from the strain of war, injury and illness: rather he is invariably remembered as the deadly sniper who fought off a fearsome bear with weapons and his wits. Jim Christie's near-death experience at the paws and jaws of an angry and wounded grizzly bear served to forge a new man. Christie became legend. In the years before the war started, those who read certain papers or listened to certain campfire stories had already learned something of Christie's story. The war was to ensure the enduring frequency of those stories being told. Williams describes Christie as "the most durable of men," and this description was entirely appropriate, but the caveat might be added that the war ultimately broke even this, the most durable of men, leaving him shattered and aged before invaliding him back to Canada.⁵¹⁸ Christie's case proves that, ultimately, not even the most durable of men could take life without reciprocal trauma.

Two other sniper memoirs deserve to be considered for what they say about sniping, and what they tell us about the living legend that was Jim Christie's and his battalion's during the war. Herbert McBride, an American who served as a sniper with the 21st Battalion, highlights that the attitudes, motivation, and understanding of the war were spoken of in common ways between snipers even outside the battalion: "I assure you that when I was behind the rifle, the principal feeling was one of keen satisfaction and excitement of the same kind that the hunter always knows."⁵¹⁹ The world traveller, author, and sniper Hesketh-Prichard describes sniping in exactly the same hunting vein, if in an

⁵¹⁷ On shell shock, which Christie was suffering from, see. On psychiatric treatment during the war, see, Peter Leese, *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). Fiona Reid, *Broken Men: Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain 1914-1930* (London: Continuum Books, 2010). Mark Humphries, "War's Long Shadow: Masculinity, Medicine, and the Gendered Politics of Trauma, 1914-1939," *The Canadian Historical Review* 91, 3 (2010): 503-531. Jay Winter, "Shell-Shock and the Cultural History of the Great War," *The Journal of Contemporary History*, 35, 1 (2000): 7-11.

⁵¹⁸ Williams, *PPCLI 1914-1984*, 8.

⁵¹⁹ McBride, *Rifleman Went to War*, 98.

immensely more British fashion: “It was exactly as if a party of really capable sportsmen were shooting an area for big game, or, better still, a Scottish deer forest. Imagine these sportsmen replaced by careless and ignorant tourists. The ground would inevitably be maltreated, the wrong beasts shot, corries shot when the wind was unfavourable, and all the deer stampeded onto the next forest. Of course in this case the deer did not stampede, but plucked up courage and shot back.”⁵²⁰ Hesketh-Prichard mentions Christie in this regard, which is testament to how far-reaching his fame had become: “Lieutenant Christie... was one of the individual pioneers of sniping. He had spent his life hunting in the Yukon, and he simply turned the same qualities that had brought him within the range of the mountain sheep to the downfall of Fritz the Forest Guard.”⁵²¹ As in the accounts of Patricia’s snipers, so too with those of Hesketh-Prichard and McBride, the key way that men tended to describe incidental killing – when they talked about it at all – was as an extension or continuation of the sport of hunting, with different rules.

Although killing was an end unto itself, and usually framed as a sporting act, the immediate need to protect comrades or avenge oneself on the enemy for the loss of a friend tends to recur. In McBride’s work, we find another striking example of how men fought ultimately to protect or avenge their comrades. While employed as a machine-gunner, McBride held his dying comrade, who had been shot in the abdomen, and found himself put on a more determinedly lethal path by his friend’s last request: “Charlie Wendt was a very strong clean living young man, and I really thought that despite the serious nature of the wound he would pull through. He did not think so, but did not make the slightest outcry, merely kept saying that ‘everything is all right.’ *Finally he asked me to get about ten of them for him and I told him that I would do it.* [Emphasis added]”⁵²² McBride notes that the experience changed

⁵²⁰ Hesketh-Prichard, *Sniping in France*, 97.

⁵²¹ Ibid., 36.

⁵²² McBride, *Rifleman Went to War*, 72-73.

him, and “put me on the warpath right.”⁵²³ The theme of being motivated to kill in revenge for the loss of dearly loved comrades tends to predominate as the specific motivating factor in the decision to kill. The fact that men tended to remember killing within the vein of revenge demonstrates how much individual initiative was present in the choice to take life.

Both McBride and Hesketh-Prichard’s accounts also make clear how far the fame and reputation of the Patricia’s had spread during the war. Hesketh Prichard has it that the battalion and the Corps as a whole “was full of officers who understood how to deal with the German sniper.”⁵²⁴ McBride is more emphatic on how high the reputation of the regiment stood for him and his American countrymen:

I have frequently been complemented by the remark... ‘Mac went over with the Pats.’... Membership in that organization, even after it had been whittled down by successive engagements, was a mark of honor [sic] which we, of the other Canadian contingents, fully appreciated... You, the reader, may not understand why I am spending all this time telling about an outfit with which I was never connected. Well I’ll tell you... they were our living examples during all the rest of the war.⁵²⁵

The legend of the Patricia’s, like the legend of Jim Christie, was actively emulated and promulgated by soldiers inside the battalion and outside of it. It was the prowess of men like Christie that helped secure this reputation.

If war was a continuation of the hunting spirit that Christie had mastered before the war began, it also entirely refocused men’s attention onto their human opposites, at least within the zone of battle. As Jones has it, describing the ground that made up his contemporaneous chunk of the front-line, “Just on our left we have a large marsh or swamp which neither side can occupy called ‘No Man’s Land’... Hostile patrols often meet and have lively scraps. Our men carry heavy clubs as well as rifles.

⁵²³ Ibid., 71.

⁵²⁴ Hesketh-Prichard, *Sniping in France*, 36.

⁵²⁵ McBride, *Rifleman Went to War*, 246.

The place swarms with wild duck which certainly never heard so much shooting and were never less shot at!"⁵²⁶ War changed the quarry but not the spirit underlying accurate rifle fire applied by hunters.

⁵²⁶ Jones, "Two Years in the Trenches," 99.

Chapter 6: Walter Mackay Draycot – A Pawn’s Topography of Battle

In many ways, Walter Draycot was the quintessential Patricia soldier at the beginning of the war. He was certainly their target recruit. An original, he had seen service with the King’s Royal Rifles during the Boer War before emigrating to Canada and working in frontier towns across the country, eventually settling down to homestead in North Vancouver. There he hacked out a patch from the primordial forest and helped to found the town of Lynn Valley (Draycot road is still there, as is a statue of an aged Draycot sitting on a bench; he is something of a local celebrity). He was thus Canadian by residency and experience, and British (English) by birth, as most of the Originals were.⁵²⁷ He had learned the necessity of being multi-talented during his service for the Queen on the Veldt, as well as his pioneering experience as a fruit rancher, gardener, lumberjack, hunter, travelling salesman, teamster, (amateur) geologist, labourer, and whatever else needed doing. His attitude had allowed him to work up a “stake” (or, rather, to work up, lose, and work up again). Like the others here studied, Draycot was exceptional in the single-mindedness, intelligence and devotion that he applied to the problems that life faced him with. As he put it, speaking in the third person, “Mac continued to do his own work, in his own way to the end.”⁵²⁸ Moreover, Draycot believed that the Canadian soldier was much the same. As he saw it, the “colonial’s motto” was “give me a rifle, lots of ammunition and cut out the fancy stuff.”⁵²⁹ In Draycot’s accounts, we also see more frequent descriptions of the worst parts of the war and the debilitating horror of it then tends to survive in the public reminiscences of the other soldiers here studied.

Life was interminably more physically difficult and dangerous in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada than it is in Canada 100 years later. Whereas Munroe was present at the

⁵²⁷ Although the CEF eventually, and barely, became manned by a majority of men born in Canada, both the PPCLI and the CEF were originally manned by British Emigrants.

⁵²⁸ W. Mackay Draycot, “The Emigrant,” unpublished manuscript, 76, 26-22-3, North Vancouver Museum and Archives.

⁵²⁹ Draycot, “*Pawn 883*”, 3.

Porcupine fires that killed so many, Draycot records that in two days, a massive fire laid waste to portions of the burgeoning settlement at Coquitlam and his settlement in North Vancouver: "Big fires burning at Coquitlam three Lumber Mills or Camps destroyed. Loss to Timber \$250,000. Loss to Lumber Camps \$15,000. Anderson Shingle Mill North Lonsdale, North Vancouver is totally destroyed by fire. Loss. 10,000 dollars. Also 10 houses along with it. The whole south side of Timber Mountain is afire."⁵³⁰ When his own property flooded out, the newly felled trees scraping away the good black soil down to the bare clay below, and in one night undoing a year of solid and unrelenting physical labour, Draycot laughed out loud:

"Mother Nature has been exceedingly frugal with her blessings but overgenerous with this particular form of offering... Now I can have the whole nice lake for boating as well as a breeding pool for fishing!" "How can you take the matter so easy?" [his neighbour Mrs. Neill] enquired. "Why not?," replied Mac, "What is, IS! Might as well consider the whole thing a huge joke. There's nothing one can do about it."⁵³¹

This is the same attitude that allowed Draycot the necessary equanimity to survive and take life on the battlefields of France and the Salient, but resigned acceptance was only an attitude he could maintain in the trenches for so long. As he would discover, the things that "were" on the Western Front, unalterable facts like an enemy barrage, took a deeper toll than the flooding of his property.

Shooting, one of Draycot's many passions, was a serious sport in Canada at that time. He described his performance in similar terms to that of most professional athletes in a modern-day interview: "'Well, what do *you* figure on winning, Mac?' 'Winning? Why ask such a question when you three have already allotted yourselves the major prizes. All I can do is to go out merely for the sport of shooting as I've always done,' dryly retorted Mac."⁵³² Although Draycot had a clear understanding of the sport of shooting before the war, his experiences in Africa had taught him another important lesson,

⁵³⁰ Draycot, "Journal," 21-22 May 1914. He reports the weather as "Hot & Windy."

⁵³¹ Draycot, "Emigrant," 76.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 40. Draycot won the competition, and many others, he was a first-class shot before the war.

that it is often better and safer to preserve one's position by holding his fire rather than constantly trying to fire at the front.

During his service at the front, Draycot's general handiness, as well as deadly accuracy and steadiness, led him into numerous quixotic occupations and situations while serving for the regiment, and later attached to the 7th Brigade under Major General A.C. "Batty Mac" Macdonell. He was a company-sniper,⁵³³ a barber, and a topographer. Of course, these were only the semi-official job titles he held in an interminably long and variegated list of occupations. For example, he took the King's pay for delivering messages during the bombardment at Mont Sorrel, and stepped on the faces of dead soldiers of the King in the process.⁵³⁴ Nevertheless, all his occupations were geared towards harassing, confusing, and killing the enemy and promulgating knowledge of his dispositions. As Draycot wrote in his diary after being taken on the staff of the 7th Brigade as a private soldier, "It is the wishes of the Canadian Corps Command that we give the enemy no rest and no sleep, it was so!"⁵³⁵ Although his experiences were unusual for a line infantryman, his example serves as an illustration of the differing ways men could be employed for the confusion and destruction of the enemy without actually pulling the trigger of a rifle (not to say that that was not one of his occupations). His stories evidence the survivability and adaptability of man in the most extreme circumstances and detail some of the ways and situations in which men could and did kill on the Western Front. They also show that, although it proved easy enough to kill human beings, it is remarkably hard to kill every human being in a given area. Like Christie, Draycot (with the help of his friend "Lady Luck") would somehow emerge from the war relatively whole of body and, in the long term, sound of mind.

⁵³³ Later attached to the Battalion HQ as a topographer, Draycot was never formally a sniper in the sniper section (which was actually a platoon in size), he only discusses sniping while with No. 2 Company, evidence to the fact that the best shots amongst the company would be expected to snipe in their section of trench.

⁵³⁴ Draycot, "*Pawn 883*", 107-109.

⁵³⁵ Walter Draycot, "Journal," 17 Dec 1916, digital transcription, North Vancouver Museum and Archives.

Draycot left much archival evidence behind to explain his war service including a diary, two unpublished manuscripts, and myriad articles, sketches, copies of orders, and speeches. In Draycot's reminiscences we see the hard-working but relatively leisured adventurer holding court to posterity. Unlike Munroe who tended inexorably towards hyperbole or Christie who left scant evidence of his personal take on the war, Draycot's tales have the authenticity of impeccable provenance and the thoroughness of a man devoted to polishing the details of his memories over decades. His service record, journal and monograph usually agree on all but the minor details. Nevertheless, Draycot also edited his accounts as the years weighed more heavily upon him. For example, one story that he told often in print was that of the battalion's first entry into the trenches, in which they had arrived, utterly exhausted from long marches into the frozen cloying mud of Flanders. Shortly after their arrival in the trenches, Draycot and his partner paired off to sleep and watch respectively. Draycot records that he fell asleep and dreamt of a warm fire and a Christmastime feast only to be awoken by the cries of his partner who was slowly drowning in the half-frozen mud. In some versions of the story, Draycot is the one drowning and who had to be dug out, and in others it is his partner.⁵³⁶ In either case, he claims to have then fired a few rounds through mud-plugged loopholes to clear them of the mud that had seeped in, to test his rifle, and to give himself a martial occupation to help ward off the cold.

When the war started, Draycot returned to the uniform as a live lobster being boiled, by degrees.⁵³⁷ The day that Germany declared war on France, 1 August 1914, Draycot spent cavorting and

⁵³⁶ Walter Draycot, "The Princess Patricia's First Entry into the Trenches in Flanders January 1915," 9, 25-22-31, North Vancouver Archives. Draycot, "Pawn 883," 31-32. Walter Mackay Draycot, "The Princess Patricia's First Entry into the Trenches in Flanders, January 4th, 1915 to Jan 8, '15," unpublished manuscript, 3, 31(4)-4, PPCLI Archives. In the first two versions, he has it that his comrade's cries awakened him from a dream of Christmas dinner (given before he left for the Boer War) and he helped to dig the nearly drowned man out of the mud. In the latter, he has it that he was the one drowning when woken by his partner's cries. We can identify his partner based on Draycot's testimony as Lester George Rooks, a watchmaker killed at Vimy.

⁵³⁷ Or frog, either metaphor works. As one editorial put it, the "Urban Myth... also illustrates an aspect of human psychology: we tend to accept things that creep up on us slowly but steadily, even when they take control of our lives. But one day we wake up and find ourselves in boiling water. And such is the nature of excess." "The Tale of the Boiling Frog," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 171, no. 12 (2004): 1425.

life-saving at Horseshoe Bay with a group of friends including John Neate, whom he pulled out of deep water when he started to drown: "John not able to swim dived into deep water and was sinking into for 2nd time when I saved him. My 4th act of life saving. To Empire Theatre North Vancouver with the Neate family."⁵³⁸ Learning of the war, Draycot, decided to wait for his "papers" to call him up for enlistment and continued his life as usual, working to lay water pipes for neighbours and improving his own home. For the remainder of the month, Draycot seemed content to wait, anticipating that somebody would ask him to rejoin the colours. The war news, filtered through the patriotic lens of British wire services, is reflected in Draycot's journal together with the blissfully peaceful surroundings: "At work on Keith Rd. School/ Germans pile up their dead in stacks of 30 at Liege (Belgium) then set fire to them."⁵³⁹ Nothing arrived for over a month and Draycot waited in vain only to see other men get their "embarkation orders."

By the end of August, as he watched the 72nd Highland Regiment depart for Valcartier and the war, Draycot seemed increasingly less content to wait for his regiment to come to him. On the 23rd of August, he was party to a tearful farewell dinner: "To Rice Lake Rifle Range with Doctor McMane, Mr. J. Barker & others made 33 score at 200 yards... A pathetic farewell is given to Mr[.] Ed Hughes at Neate's. All family are in tears."⁵⁴⁰ It seems that the enlistment of his friends and acquaintances, and especially that of John Neate, put Draycot in an uncomfortable position; as a trained veteran and unmarried man of military age, it was untenable to be out of uniform when the big show had arrived: "Jack Neate calls in evening '*sans peur et sans reproach*'"⁵⁴¹ By the 24th of September, Draycot helped to examine NCOs for a Captain Purdie, and on the 30th of September he wrote a letter to the government "offering his services." Two weeks later he received a reply from Sam Hughes' office that provided "no satisfaction."

⁵³⁸ Draycot, "Journal," 1 Aug 1914.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 10 Aug 1914.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 23 Aug 1914.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 14 Sept 1914.

On the 28th of October, he went to Vancouver to *sell* his firearms, confident in the expectation that he will soon be furnished one by the King. He eventually settled on the payment of a \$20.00 debt in exchange for his .303 and .22 and was able to leave the West Coast without owing anyone anything, a point in which he took considerable pride.⁵⁴² On the 9th of September, transportation papers arrived from the Canadian government allowing him free passage to England to rejoin his regiment.

When Draycot arrived at Winchester, intent on rejoining the King's Royal Rifles, he was interviewed by the regiment's Colonel and offered a commission, but decided instead to enlist in the Patricia's after he met Billy Huston, his former competition shooting rival:

Poor Billy! His last words to me were "Say, you see this rifle stock," pointing to his rifle, "Well, it's going to be covered in knotches. One for every dead German." "You mean for every one you Kill?" "Sure!" "Listen Billy, you're not on the rifle range now. These targets hit back!" was my advice to a friend and sporting rival, who had never seen war nor left his native heath, -- Canada. Billy had challenged many a shot on the range but there was one he could not challenge -- the one "that shot back." The first knotch was made by a German sniper.⁵⁴³

The keen shot knew nothing of what shooting was while at war, and Draycot may have decided to join the Patricia's to help protect his friend and those like him.

On the 16th of December, Draycot arrived in France as a private with No. 2 Company; one of the first Canadians in France, he left a week before Christmas and eight days after signing his attestation papers: "Women & children meet us with hot coffee, bread & butter, sandwiches, cake and fruit. Give them many rousing cheers and sing 'Hail Hail the gangs all here!' & what the hell do we care etc. Embark on S.S Cardiganshire for Le Havre at 7:15 PM. Rain at night"⁵⁴⁴ Before leaving for France he bought a new Kodak and a .25 automatic pistol that "proved useful on several occasions."⁵⁴⁵ His diary and memoir would seem to indicate that Draycot only used the pistol against rats, but it is impossible to say how many rounds Draycot fired from of his pistol during the course of the war. McBride notes how

⁵⁴² Ibid., 3 Nov 1914. See also, Draycot, "Pawn 883," 3-4.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 45. See also, "The Emigrant," 41.

⁵⁴⁴ Draycot, "Journal," 18 Dec 1914.

⁵⁴⁵ Draycot, "Pawn 883," 6.

useful he found his pistol to be in the trenches, viewing it as a better weapon of defence in the enclosed spaces of the trenches than a rifle.⁵⁴⁶

Less than a week later, after severe marches and a riotous Christmas campfire, Draycot was finding his endurance tested to the utmost in his first rotation into the trenches. He juxtaposes the regiment's cheerful departure with the reality of glutinous mud that sought to swallow them into the earth, and barbed wire that spelled near certain death if a man was caught in it. There were also no communication trenches, and all movement had to be made overland:

"You will pass around the corner in single fyle [sic]. Watch out for shell holes in the road; they're deep and full of water. If you fall in you might not get out alive!"... At Southampton, and at Blaringham we had sung 'What the Hell Do We Care Now!' It was not an idle boast. What did we care. When the next flare went up we did not go down – for we were entangled in a mass of barbed wire! If ever a company of men were Fate's playthings we surely were. The noise of a ripping garment takes my thoughts back to that scene in the barbed wire, less than a block from the front-line.⁵⁴⁷

It was the attitude of the men who sang "what do we care" that allowed them to move forward into the trenches. Although they were already "fate's play things" when they loaded up at Southampton, at that point they had not cared. As we will see in McLaren and Gianelli's cases, the ability to enjoy frivolity and pack up their worries outside of the line was critical to a soldier's mental conception of his service inside of it, or his ability to kill and carry on to do it the next time.

Like many of those Originals who survived the war, Draycot was not present at Frezenburg in May. In January, his left eye was wounded as he was struck in the face by lumps of chalk and bits of shot which temporarily rendered him blind. This was scarcely a month after the PPCLI entry into the

⁵⁴⁶ McBride, *Rifleman went to War*, Chapter 10. "Now I am going to tell you the honest truth about something. During my war experience, which extended from September, 1915 to February, 1917 and including innumerable little 'contacts' with the enemy and several major battles, I fired exactly seven shots at an enemy with my pistol. I used up quite a lot of ammunition, sho[o]ting at rats, rabbits and tin cans but as to shooting Germans, well, I've told you, seven... But brother, those were seven badly needed shots. There may be a moral in this: I don't know. If so, figure it out for yourself." Ibid., 159. It reads like McBride was into the booze when he composed that piece of martial prose.

⁵⁴⁷ Draycot, "Pawn 883," 24-6.

trenches and Draycot was in England convalescing throughout much of the first full year of the war. A discrepancy appears between Draycot's service record, his diary, and his monograph on when he returned to France. In *Pawn* 883 he says that he returned to the regiment in July 1915, but both his service record and diary indicate that he did not arrive back until late August.

Draycot returned to a regiment of unfamiliar faces, and he found himself the seasoned veteran to the youths who had replaced the Originals after the decimation at Frezenburg specifically, and the first months of the war generally. He respected these young men of the University Companies who had been educated to "higher principles of decency, ethics, manners, and all the refinements of our beasted civilization"⁵⁴⁸ and found them being tried hard by the war, expected to survive on meagre portions: "Were we starving? Oh, No! But a pound of bread per day to a growing youth, under war conditions, is inadequate. There were many young University boys in the 'Princess Pats' regiment – and they were hounds after Jam, cake and other delicacies, which made the old, seasoned, soldiers smile at their cravings."⁵⁴⁹ During this period, Draycot filled many unofficial roles within the company including cook, barber, and sniper.

Although the deadliest enemy in France was undoubtedly the Germans, Draycot devotes as much or more of his memoir detailing the scourge of rats that he encountered at the front: indeed, the two scourges are discussed in similar terms. Just prior to his first recorded kill in No Man's Land, Draycot's platoon had encountered an army of rats in open battle. The exhausted soldiers, fresh from their first two tours of waterlogged and winter frozen trenches (fires not being allowed in the front-line during the first winter of the war, even though it was winter), bedded down in a barn that harboured "millions" of rats. Draycot recalls that it was exhausted and exasperated group who fought this battle, which started when,

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 145.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 51. Note that he uses a dog metaphor they were "*hounds*" after jam, which speaks also to his conception of them as companions and comrades.

In the act of burrowing deeper to a warmer spot through a man's open tunic its scratching awoke the sleeper whom, on placing his hand on its furry coat and realizing it was a rat, gave a lusty yell of fright... "Look, the yard's full of 'em!" yelled a wide-eyed young man. "Yer crazy. Them's cobblestones. No. Wait. Dammit there's millions of the blasted thing" ... "Come on fellers we're going hunting. No sleep tonight."⁵⁵⁰

Note that the last line is as applicable to sniping and raiding as it is to fighting rats. The exhausted men soon had their blood up, and went on to slay scores of rats, taking very minor casualties in the process.

Cudgels and bayonets were the primary weapons, but pistols were employed as well: "When the rats attempted to emulate a tight-rope walker along the perch-rods they were knocked out cold by the impact of a weapon held firmly in the hand of a wildly excited soldier."⁵⁵¹ Their prowess at close quarters fighting is indicated by the fact that no one was shot! Draycot acted as "flashlightman" and "had to keep continually on the hop to prevent rats running up my legs. The dead were never counted but hundreds of the repulsive creatures were slain. Our casualties – three men bitten on legs above the knee."⁵⁵² The fact is that Draycot talks about fighting other humans in much the same sporting terms, as an action carried out by some in a frenzy of excitement, and in others with cool detachment.⁵⁵³ The viciousness with which the men assault and are assaulted by rats is clearly portrayed as a microcosm of and metaphor for these same men's combat with the Teutonic enemy.

Killing the enemy during quiet tours of the line was as much a psychological prerogative as it was a tactical one. The first time that Draycot describes killing the enemy in his monograph makes clear that it was a thoroughly fed up soldier who entered No Man's Land on or about October 1st, 1915. He had just been through an exceptionally arduous tour of the support trenches on the 30th of September.

⁵⁵⁰ Walter Draycot, "Man vs. Rat," 1, 26-22-32, *North Vancouver Archives*. See also, Draycot, "Pawn 883," 53.

⁵⁵¹ Draycot, "Man vs. Rat," 3.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁵³ Like Orwell's Winston, Draycot was possessed of a typically English, deeply rooted and psychologically complex fear of rats. As a young man, he had witnessed a barroom fight between a vicious rat and an uncouth man, "whose mother had no doubt showered kisses on him when a baby" on a wager of "about \$1.50." The latter won out, biting the gigantic rat in the neck and worrying it to death. "the animal's squeals were shrilly and frightfully bloodcurdling." *Ibid.*

Even though the War Diary states that “nothing of importance” occurred at the battalion, Draycot encountered some of the worst conditions he had yet experienced with his platoon in the support trenches:⁵⁵⁴

We have been in the open trench two days two nights no shelter. At 9 AM the Germans shell us with heavy guns. The Huns commence again with trench mortars and we reply. Some note paper comes to me when rations arrive from Headquarters. Welcome. I’ve none. We are on Bully Beef and biscuits. I make some cocoa by putting some fat in a can with a piece of rag, then light it placing the canteen over it. Our hard biscuits are covered with mud, therefore – gritty. Rats!!! Lots of them. The fellows are wallowing in mud and have not the heart to amend difficulties.⁵⁵⁵

Upon being relieved, Draycot’s platoon was informed that it would return to the sanctuary of the rat-infested barn in Eclusiers. They arrived to find “Ha! A surprize! [sic] No rum ration!!... Think of it, the most sacred thing of all – stolen!” a sergeant and a few other men having been placed under arrest, the men were then given more bad news –they were to return to the trenches.⁵⁵⁶ Draycot, having been denied rum and even the temporary refuge of a rat-infested barn had felt what Shay called, a “betrayal of *thémis* by power holders.”⁵⁵⁷ A few days earlier a “dug-out major” blithely offered his company officers a drink while their men were outside in the freezing rain.

“Good evening gentlemen. What regiment?” “The Princess Patricia’s! ‘Ah yes! It’s a dirty night to be sure. Won’t you step inside for a moment to partake of a whiskey and soda? It’ll warm you up!’... “No thank you sir!” was the wise answer of our leaders. One can imagine what affect this foolish invitation had on the troops within hearing. The official bomb-proof shelter was well furnished within. Evening dinner was about to be served on the linen-covered dining table. It made one sick to think of the comparison – our dugouts as before described with the rats, etc.⁵⁵⁸

When Draycot returned to the trenches at “Freeze-some-more!” (Frise-sur-Somme) without a rest, he ventured out into No Man’s Land, alone.

⁵⁵⁴ “PPCLI War Diaries,” 28-30 Sept 1915.

⁵⁵⁵ Draycot, “Journal,” 29 Sept 1915.

⁵⁵⁶ Draycot, “Pawn 883,” 58.

⁵⁵⁷ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 37.

⁵⁵⁸ Draycot, “Pawn 883,” 57-58.

Pent up rage at the military system above him, his miserable situation, and the betrayal of “what’s right” are important catalysts of a “Berserk state” where men seek out opportunities to kill the enemy.⁵⁵⁹ Draycot had decided to go into No Man’s Land and do his work in his own way, like always: “Out into ‘No Man’s Land’ through a sap. Dawn slowly comes, so do some Germans – they stay there! A straggler follows shortly after. He carries a small bush to hide his body. ‘Sorry old chap, saw you move!’ Crack! The rifle spoke. Down went the bush and the man behind it! Thwack! A bullet misses my right ear by one inch as it cuts a twig off a small bush beside me.”⁵⁶⁰ As usual, in this first narrative of killing that Draycot gives in his memoirs, he is careful to dissociate himself psychologically, as the actual agent of destruction. It was his rifle that “spoke,” not Draycot the man pulling the trigger. His euphemism displays the moral ambiguity he still felt about the act years later, and the fact that a certain psychological distance is needed when describing trauma, either sustained or inflicted. Draycot’s concealed position and tactical acuity evidently allowed him to survive the day, but it may have been his rage and sense of wounded pride that led him into No Man’s Land in the first place.

Almost inevitably, killing demanded retribution/retaliation from the enemy either immediately or over the long term. Throughout much of the war, this retaliation was almost always scalable in direct proportion to the threat posed by the enemy. As a pawn, Draycot realized this very early in the war. He describes a company-level volley fire at the enemy designed to impede the progress of a German working party doing night-time construction of defensive positions. Draycot had headed out into no man’s land during the night and observed the Germans working on their barbed wire, and on his way back was startled when an owl landed beside him. Despite the scare, he made it back to friendly lines unmolested:

Orders were issued for every available man to “stand-to.” Three sharp volleys rang out in quick succession, and immediately afterwards “Heads down!” yelled our officer. Not a moment too

⁵⁵⁹ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 82.

⁵⁶⁰ Draycot, “Pawn 883,” 59.

soon for the tops of our trenches were raked with machine-gun and rifle fire which our “friends” thought a fitting compliment in return for ours. Apparently they had lost heavily by our fusillade. They never could take a joke! Hence revenge!⁵⁶¹

This a model of the type of fire Papineau described under the effective control of an officer. It was also a good “joke” to Draycot.

The revenge was not only one-sided, and Draycot found that he was impelled to be its agent due to his skill as a sharpshooter. Draycot describes the need to retaliate while under effective enemy fire as the chief impetus for his killing. When he found himself in a particularly “hot” part of the line where “Hell has come to earth,” he had to be the instrument of retaliation.⁵⁶² “This sort of accuracy was getting our nerves with the incessant whack of rifle bullets hitting some object, or one of the boys.”⁵⁶³ Draycot was tasked as the man to help relieve some of the pressure from the enemy, as the situation was “so desperate that my former services as a sniper were again utilized.”⁵⁶⁴ After observing the accurate fire of the opposing snipers, one of whom clipped the stick holding up a “windgage propeller,” Captain Cornish, with whom Draycot was working, complimented the marksmanship: “Nice work!... Which goes to show how careful one has to be around here.”⁵⁶⁵ Shortly thereafter, Draycot had his waterproof cape (“but not bullet-proof”) shot through: “The impact twisted me around, faced the enemy, and ducked in time to miss two more.” Draycot stresses the willingly voluntold nature of his services as a sniper, the situation demanded the elimination of the threat posed by the enemy marksmen.

When planning his retaliation against the effective fire they were receiving, Draycot’s first goal remained maximizing his own safety. The first artifice he used to attempt to accomplish this was a “periscope rifle,” a design that allowed the rifle barrel to be above the parapet while the soldier aimed and fired it from two feet below with the aid of a periscope: “All very nice, but when the trigger was

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., 60-61.

⁵⁶² Ibid., 81.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

pressed the rifle barrel would flip up in the air thus giving the position away to enemy sharpshooter who finally damaged my new fangled rifle and gadgets for me.”⁵⁶⁶ Next, Captain Mackenzie – recently returned from England – gave Draycot an “elephant gun” to try: “Ha, an idea! Getting an empty sandbag two holes were cut into it for eyes and, presto! An excellent piece of deception!” Draycot got into position just before dawn, and waited, without moving, armed with a rifle that chambered a round over half an inch in diameter, “and the cartridge containing the charge like a miniature shell.” He waited in agony for the German sharpshooter to begin firing: “Try to stand, or even sit, still for only one minute and you will get some idea of what my predicament was like. The least move would be my death knell.”⁵⁶⁷ But, before the tension became too much for Draycot to bear, he observed two rounds fired by a German. After the second, Draycot felt confident enough to retaliate.

“Alright me lad! You’re firing from a slit in some armour plate. Fire another shot for me to make sure.” I mused. A brief spell. “Thanks!” Here goes! Wham! The elephant rifle went off – and so did yours truly, off the firing step! To back of the trench... From a special periscope Mac had watched my shot. “You got him alright! Slightly low but right through the hole”... in his elation Mac raised his hat in the air when s-s-s-st! a bullet from the opposite direction sent a hole through it. “For God’s sake be careful!”⁵⁶⁸

Draycot scored another hit shortly thereafter by using a turnip head with cigarette to confirm an enemy position. The cigarette was shot through (although the turnip could go to the pot whole), and Draycot, having moved his head slowly into a “specially prepared lookout”, confirmed where the German was firing from. He then decided to talk the matter over with his companion.

Believe you me the hazard was ninety nine percent in favour of sudden death if he discovered me. Lady Luck was still on my side. My telescope on the rifle showed up plainly the slit in the iron defence, a vertical hair line crossed two parallel lines in the lens of the telescope. The vertical line fitted the slit in the German’s lookout hence my line of fire and sight was perfect, and the crossed lines gave the right angle. My finger squeezed on the trigger. Whang!⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 82.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., 83-84.

In surviving through dangerous spots, Draycot learned when and how to take his shots in such a way that he might survive to write his memoir.

Draycot had only sporadic sightings of the enemy throughout the war, and only some of those were propitious for offensive action. Often, sightings of the enemy are as innocuous as “See an enemy sentry on sentry-go.”⁵⁷⁰ As was the case with the party of Germans who passed his position in no man’s land, he often chose not to fire. Christie, too, points out that special targets should be selected when sniping, not mere riflemen.⁵⁷¹ When Draycot did believe the time right to take life, his narrative asides bear witness to the fact that, during sniping at least, he bore no particular ill-will to the individual he was killing, even rhetorically apologizing to them for his actions. He keenly felt the complicated relationship that existed regarding the necessity of taking life and orders to that effect. We have seen how killing was retaliatory, but Draycot claims that retaliation could also be wrought by accepting the surrender of deserters in the front-lines.

Opposed to the Saxon Regiment. Seem decent fellows. They would like to surrender to us but our orders are to decline any such proffering. The troops are willing but “Orders must be obeyed.” However, some do come over. Took a chance, and were taken prisoners. In the early hours of the morning our “friends” become exceedingly annoyed. Strafe us mightily. After this we accept no more invitations! Will shoot on sight.⁵⁷²

He often employed euphemism because it seemed the only way to describe the taking of men’s lives. Indeed, euphemism is how he deals with what was a truly tragic situation for the front-soldier; what Draycot is saying is that the only way to avoid being “strafed mightily,” was to kill those who were simply trying to give up. The front was a zone of danger and death with prison on either side. He, together with regiment and brigade (and division, corps, army, and army-group), sought to see “the enemy take their medicine” and to “keep them entertained.”⁵⁷³

⁵⁷⁰ Draycot, “Journal,” 24 Jan 1917.

⁵⁷¹ “Should look for special targets viz: Officers, N.C.O.s M.G. teams Etc.” Christie, “Ruby Diary,” 10 Feb 1916.

⁵⁷² Draycot, “Pawn 883,” 47.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., “Entertained,” 178, “Medicine,” 190.

Although often using familiar language towards the enemy, Draycot also vilified them throughout his writings. He constantly reported on rumours and facts about new German methods to attack shipping, cities, and men in the trenches: "Enemy threaten to use horrible methods if we don't accept their peace terms 'dropping germ bombs on London, Paris, etc. & also an increase in 'U' boat campaign. Our dugout is severely shelled."⁵⁷⁴ In his memoir, he juxtaposes the valour of the allies with the fiendishness and occasionally buffoonery of the enemy. He describes laying in hospital early in the war, when the casualties had begun to accumulate in earnest: "In one bed a Belgian with half his thigh blown away by an explosive bullet; a few beds away was a German suffering intense pain from a bayonet wound that had penetrated that part of the body Nature intended for seating purposes. His periodical shrieks reverberated, demon like, through the great hall – so did his curses, 'Gott strafe --- everybody!'"⁵⁷⁵ Evidently, the German could not see the humour in the situation. It is interesting to see what is a classic propaganda trope repeated as fact in Draycot's memoirs.

After Draycot was taken on staff at Brigade, he became tapped into the killing power of the artillery at brigade and higher levels of command. At Lens, the sketching Draycot observed an enemy machine-gun nest holding up the advance of the Canadians into the south-western outskirts of the mining town. When he returned to report his findings to General Macdonell, the Artillery Brigade Commander, General "Birstall"⁵⁷⁶ accompanied him back to the spot:

After sizing up the situation he turned to me with the remark, "About how many shells of 9.2's would you suggest it would take to blast them out?" "About ten, sir!" was my reply, and even ten would be twice the amount, if not more, should direct hits be made." "Only ten?" he questioned slowly, with a smile. "Why ten would only tickle them. We'll do the job properly and give them ONE HUNDRED!" "Ye gads! ONE HUNDRED!"... He further decided that after he had "telephoned the order in" we should watch the result. "Ah!" said he triumphantly... "We'll now watch the fun." The "fun" as he grimly termed it commenced. Through our binoculars we

⁵⁷⁴ Draycot, "Journal," 14 Dec 1916.

⁵⁷⁵ Draycot, "Pawn 883," 44.

⁵⁷⁶ Draycot could have been referring to Brigadier General William Birchall, the 4th Divisional Artillery Commander, or, more likely, Major General Henry Burstall, General Officer Commanding Royal Canadian Artillery, 1915-16 and commander of the 2nd Canadian Division in 1917.

perceived a most merciless smashing process of destruction. At least fifty per cent of the shells made direct hits... "Is there anything else you want moved? If so just say the word!!, my batteries are always willing to oblige!"⁵⁷⁷

Throughout we see the employment of euphemistic language to describe the harsh realities of blowing other men to bits. This anecdote also demonstrates the fundamental truth of the battlefield, that accurate, tactically relevant information in the hands of those who know how to make use of it (especially the artillery) is the most dangerous weapon on the battlefield. Draycot's drawings, accurate map-making, and observations led directly to the death of the unseen men who inhabited his seemingly tranquil topographical sketches, because they were accurate portrayals of enemy positions that could be used to concentrate fire on enemy human beings. The veracity of his sketches ultimately allowed his battalion, brigade, and corps to kill more efficiently because they better understood the battlespace.

There was another side of the same coldness and understatement with which one could fire at a loophole that was unleashed during battle. Draycot terms it the "savagery" of open combat at close range. Men could and did fight pitched close-range battles, savagely pumping round after round into the massed enemy who sought to destroy them, and Draycot describes his experiences at Sanctuary Wood in these terms. The savage moments were more difficult to explain and reflect upon: "One cannot go through Hell's torments and remain tranquil. Natural inborn sympathy for my fellow comrades, visions of the dead, the wounded, and the mental, as well as physical suffering, of the survivors, passed Kaleidoscopic through my brain."⁵⁷⁸ The killing moments occurred during the pause between

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., 214.

⁵⁷⁸ Draycot, "Pawn 883," 119. Will Bird uses exactly the same word to describe the chaos of the Battle of Parvillers. Will R. Bird, *And We Go On: A Memoir of the Great War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, (1934) 2014), 163. The battle was also portrayed in similar terms as those used by Draycot in press accounts of defensive fighting. See, "When Canadian Soldiers Blocked Road to Calais on the Second Occasion," undated newspaper clipping (Canadian Newspaper, 1916), 38(13)-2. Taylor believes that the kaleidoscope is a fitting description of all experiential war memoir, novelistic or otherwise: "The soldier's 'experience' comprised a series of memories of events, fragments, pieces, linked in time and place, but not necessarily making sense. It is commonplace to refer to this in terms of an incomplete jigsaw but this is a misleading metaphor, implying, as it does that there is a possible completed picture. A better comparison is with a kaleidoscope (albeit one to which additional pieces can be added) in which the pieces can be shaken to form different patterns, no one of which is the 'true' pattern." Taylor,

barrages, as the infantry had to fight it out with their own weapons, largely trapped in the battlespace by said barrages (which almost invariably had lifted to the support lines).

Draycot's actions during the Battle of Sanctuary Wood demonstrate the unique draw of battle for a professional infantryman. While a member of General Macdonell's staff, the Bisley shot was ordered not to engage the enemy, due to the increased risk that would pose to their safety.⁵⁷⁹ The bombardment and resulting confusion that presaged the attack indicated clearly to Draycot that there was a job that needed doing and, orders or no, he was the man to do it. His diary entry details his immediate reaction to the bombardment and assault.

Enemy opens up with all machinery of warfare on our portion of Salient at 8:30 AM. Frightful sight all is hurry & bustle at Bde Hd Qrt quite a change from former lassitude & inactivity. Great demand for maps & information. Capt Wallis in a nonsensical attitude. Absent-minded but full of excitement. I lay down my pen and sneak out to lend assistance, contrary to orders. *One cannot stand by and see his comrades die & not avenge them.* At noon it is reported the Huns have broken thro' our lines. [Emphasis added]⁵⁸⁰

What followed was a journey of survival through "Hell's Amphitheatre," an experience that speaks to the transformation into "savageness" that survivors of battle often describe taking place, and an odyssey through Hades.⁵⁸¹

When Draycot left to move closer to the front and his regiment, he was almost immediately tasked to help "run" messages, a mission that he thought himself above. It was Draycot's old nemesis, Lieutenant Wallis, who was guilty of plucking out the "eyes of the Brigade" to ensure that his message was delivered.⁵⁸² The dispatches read, "For general information, the assault is cancelled, enemy

Narrative and the Great War, 10. Talbott's concept of "re-enactment" of the horrors "of some doomed sector" in the minds of soldiers is also an apt way to think about it. John E. Talbott, "Soldiers, Psychiatrists, and Combat Trauma," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 27, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 438-442.

⁵⁷⁹ Draycot identifies himself as a Bisley shot in Draycot, "Pawn 883," 1. He also speaks to his abilities as a competition shooter in Northern Ontario and Winnipeg, and as musketry instructor in the 96th Lake Superior regiment before the war, but he does not give details of Bisley. Draycot, "The Emigrant," 41-42. Draycot, "Pawn 883," 107.

⁵⁸⁰ Draycot, "Journal," 2 Jun 1916.

⁵⁸¹ Draycot, "Pawn 883," "Hell's Amphitheatre" 116, "savageness" 115.

⁵⁸² Draycot, "Pawn 883," 107. Note the Oedipal paradigm that Draycot sets up here.

believed to be retiring to his old line, when we will move up and occupy our old front-lines.”⁵⁸³

Approaching the “China Wall” trenches, the front-line of the battalion, through which the men had to travel, Draycot and Wallis encounter a horrific sight.

We were about to enter sand-bag China Wall trench... It was sheer nonsense to travel in a line of fire and the object of attack so, I suggested – “Pardon me Sir, the old French trenches are well known to me. It would be far safer to use them than this one!” With a sickly grin he replied, “No! this one’s alright!” The first dead man we walked on was a kilted Scotsman... This mode of travel naturally slowed down our gruesome progress. Our boots became a bloody mess. My finer instincts compelled me at first to avoid the dead men’s faces, but was forced to walk on them or expose myself to German snipers.⁵⁸⁴

The scene is the incarnation of Dante’s vision of the pit. Again, we see a betrayal of *thémis* as a contributing factor to his later berserk state. Draycot, who through experience knew the positions far better than the subaltern nephew, had been ordered to do something far more grotesque and dangerous, despite his vastly superior tactical appreciation of the situation. After a harrowing journey to “their” objective at Yeomanry Post, the 49th Battalion’s HQ, Draycot found himself alone, again, as A.D.C. Wallis had disappeared, and he was again tasked to run dispatches to another battalion. He thus was forced to navigate the storm of hell-fire that existed everywhere. Shells of every calibre, machine guns, rifle grenades, trench mortars, and sniper fire were actively targeting any human that they could see moving, and firing densely into well zeroed positions.

During his harrowing journey to Yeomanry Post and beyond, Draycot was forced to run overland under observation, hurdling the bodies of the dead as he went: “Machine-gunners and snipers spewed their messengers of death at me – they were poor shots and evidently not accustomed to swiftly moving targets!”⁵⁸⁵ When he successfully delivered his message to Yeomanry post, he met Major (later Colonel) Griesbach, commanding the 49th (Edmonton) Battalion, who tasked Draycot with carrying the same message to Colonel Gascoigne commanding the 60th Battalion. Draycot harbored no affection for

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 108.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 110.

Griesbach, remembering their exchange with acerbic bitterness: “It was only natural for me to ask him where, in, or about, the front-line could Colonel be found! The answer was only what could be expected of the German Canadian Major – ‘Don’t know. You’ll find him somewhere in the Salient!’”⁵⁸⁶ This was one of the betrayals of *thémis* that Draycot records prior to entering a Berserk fury. More immediately, the result was a continuation of the odyssey of horror that Draycot experienced while the 7th Brigade HQ was frantically “chasing for maps and [their] maker.”⁵⁸⁷ Everywhere, the dead and dying were present, everywhere the hell-fire continued:

Here is a group of dead piled up as in a football scrimmage... The man nearest me had his head torn off his shoulder and lay, with a strip of neck-skin attached, on his knees, a bloody sight... The trenches were ripped up, jagged and holey. Even the dead were being re-shelled, mangled, and torn asunder. Passing around a corner my foot just missed clamping down on the face of a dying man. His mouth was faintly moving as if wanting me to take a message so bent down close. The only sound was an inarticulate gurgling in his throat. War! Brutal, Bloody Butchery!⁵⁸⁸

The very next picture that Draycot presents to his reader is a dead man resting in supplication despite his grievous wounds: “Another horrifying sight was that of a youth with his back bent, probably broken, over the trench paradeau [sic]. His arms and right thigh had been bandaged by comrades. A shell had caused his entrails to hang down to his legs. Four gold teeth were set in his wide open mouth, and to Heaven gazed his glassy eyes – ‘From all – we beseech thee to deliver us, good Lord!’”⁵⁸⁹ Draycot spends

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid. Griesbach – perhaps unsurprisingly – remembers the events differently. In a message to Brigade quoted in the 49th Battalion War Diaries, Griesbach describes his actions at this point: “I had at this hour not yet been able to locate the COs of the 52nd and 60th Battalions, so at 8.40 a.m. I sent a message to the O.C. 52nd Bn., addressed to Gordon House, ordering him to get his Bn. into “R” trenches. Subsequently I located three companies of the 60th Bn. in support trenches in Regent Street and neighborhood and I thereupon decided to make the 60th Bn. the attacking battalion and the 52nd Bn. the support battalion and I visited such company commanders and other officers of two battalions who had become somewhat mixed up, and explained that to them.” This would seem to support Draycot’s assertion that Griesbach had no idea where the 60th Battalion was when he sent runners to make contact with his neighbouring battalions. W.A. Griesbach, “Sanctuary Wood: A Battle Report, 2-4 June 1916,” *The Forty-Niner* 1, no., 11 (20 July 1920). <http://www.iermuseum.org/a-battle-report-of-sanctuary-wood-june-1916> (27 Aug 2017). See also, Patrick, Brennan, “From Amateur to Professional: The Experience of Brigadier-General William Antrobus Griesbach,” in *Canada and the Great War*, ed. by Briton C. Busch (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003).

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 111-112.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

the majority of the battle without seeing an enemy soldier, but his experiences ensured that, when the opportunity to fight presented itself, he was happy for the chance to avenge himself.

Amongst the first things that Draycot did in pursuance of his objective to deliver the dispatches was to drop his rifle, to be better able to run the “gauntlet” of field gun, machine-gun, and sniper fire more quickly. Two young soldiers, similarly tasked, had attached themselves to him. They soon found that they had to run through a gap over the front-line parapet of a smashed trench covered by enemy fire. Draycot was the first to go and, obtaining his object, motioned his comrades on: “When my hand goes down come over quickly, leave your rifle there. Plenty more over here. Get ready. Go!” The first lad, whose feet were “sped” by “youth, excitement, [and] desperation” made it safely, but the second made it only half way across when a “lazy” shell hit his helmet, knocking it off his head: “Instantly the boy pitched sideways letting out a frightened ejaculation, – ‘Mother!’ We rushed out and pulled him in to safety. In the meantime, making a joke out of his seemingly ludicrous remark. ‘Mother’ It was his first thought! Really nothing to laugh about but humans are that way.”⁵⁹⁰ This is evidence to the fact that men often thought of the love of women, in the most extreme circumstances. This was true for both killing and dying.

After successfully delivering this set of dispatches, Draycot was forced to run the same gauntlets back to Yeomanry Post, and “Several times it was necessary for me to eliminate near-by snipers to make a fairly safe passage for myself.”⁵⁹¹ Arriving back at Yeomanry Post, the German-Canadian major again tasked Draycot with carrying a message, but he responded that he did not have the strength remaining to do so. Agar Adamson, serendipitously on hand, saved the situation for Draycot: “Griesbach, you’d better get someone else. Private Draycot will guide me back to Brigade Headquarters. He’s a Patricia you

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 109.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 114.

know!”⁵⁹² Draycot’s identity as a Patricia, whose badges he still wore, saved him from the caprices of the 49th Battalion’s CO. Regimental loyalty ran deep. Draycot had a meal and some rest while he waited to take Adamson back to his regiment.

All the horrors up to that point were merely the opening act of the assault itself. Draycot quotes Carlyle’s history of the French Revolution: “Oh, within that carbuncled skin, condition of conditions sets in.”⁵⁹³ The shelling let up, and Draycot – true to form – began sketching and mapping the changed environs around Yeomanry Post while he waited for Adamson. But this merely presaged another bombardment: “Methodically as the German is, he commenced with rifle and machine gun fire, a certain coloured rocket signalled for Rifle grenades and light trench mortars. Another rocket of different colour called forth heavy trench mortars and light artillery. Yet another rocket sent high into the air brought on Heavy Artillery. Add the total of this armament fire and you get – Hell!”⁵⁹⁴ After this final barrage, the infantry came on to contest the ground that had been shelled so heavily. This was the interstitial moment of killing for the infantryman. When Draycot finally saw the advancing infantry in the open, he was overcome with the lust to kill; to retaliate against the bodies of those who had done damage to those of his friends.

Bayonets gleamed in the weird light. Up bobbed a fiendish spectacle in front of me. That gleaming bayonet held tightly in his hands, found its mark – in Mother Earth, for my rifle spoke, and spoke again, and again – as hundreds of ours were doing... *It was my wild savage desire to remain and kill. Every nerve of my body was on the tingle. We had cast off the human for the animal instinct. Fiendish lust. An insatiable delight.* “Thou didst kill my chums. Thou would kill me. Thee, then, must die.” [Emphasis added]⁵⁹⁵

This, then, is what battle looked like to Draycot. Despite being tasked to see some wounded men back to a dressing station, Draycot was overcome with the urge to stay and inflict retribution for the hell he had witnessed all around him.

⁵⁹² Ibid., 114-115.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 115.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 116.

Draycot is quick to vilify the fiendishness and savageness of the enemy, juxtaposing them, like Munroe, with the stalwart and upright defence of the Canadians. He believes that they were under the influence of stimulants during the battle: "At least we are sober-minded though savagery has possessed us somewhat. Not so the enemy – mostly Württembergers – whose savagery has been intensified by stimulants that have crazed his mind, and befuddled his finer sentiments."⁵⁹⁶ As is so often the case, the Canadians are presented as fighting valiantly for understandable and necessary purposes whereas the Germans are presented as the inverse, hopped up on something to get them into the right frame of mind for the battle.

After helping to turn back the German hordes, Draycot, wounded slightly in the hand and arm, decided to lead a column of walking wounded back to a dressing station, no easy task, before finally making it back to Brigade HQ. There he was debriefed by General Macdonell, and given a draught to allow him to sleep: "Whatever it was, whisky, or rum that was given me sent my head into a whirl, my memory was gone and nothing was known by me of my actions until late in the afternoon the next day."⁵⁹⁷ What is interesting is that Draycot claims that he again, in a stupefied state of mind, returned to the front and was found there in a delirium: "It appears my subconscious mind guided me back toward the front-line where my chums were. For it was there they found me, and brought me back

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 118.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 119. Draycot says that the draught contained "whiskey or rum" but it seems plausible that the draught was mixed with laudanum or morphine considering Draycot's subsequent activities. Adamson wrote that, by 1916, many of the "old hands" in the regiment had become addicted to morphine. Discussing the relative effects of differing types of alcohol in front-line dugouts (due to one of his men, a lawyer from Calgary, being brought before Court Martial for drunkenness despite a hitherto solid record of abstention) Adamson opines: "Rum is a great warmer, but it gives us more trouble almost than anything else, and certainly gets more men into trouble out here than its companion and associate – women. Personally I hate the stuff, except with hot water and lemon and sugar or in hot milk. We hardly ever drink whisky in the trenches knowing from experience it only bucks you up for the moment and is followed by a feeling of depression and chills, red wine only makes you thirsty and white wine makes you long for Malpaque Oysters, port makes you sleepy. I find Quantro [Cointreau?] in very small quantities quite satisfactory, the older hands make every effort to get hold of Morphine and often are successful through the hospital orderlies, the after effects are very bad and a man cannot be trusted on Sentry go." Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 26 Feb 1916, 154.

delirious!”⁵⁹⁸ Although his medical case history characterizes his “Shell Shock” as two days of “unconsciousness,”⁵⁹⁹ such documents tended to lack specificity, and there is no reason to doubt Draycot’s assertion that he was found at the front, unconscious. The idea that men would seek to avoid danger during war must be tempered against the psychological realities of battle that mitigate towards a desire to be with comrades and, in Draycot’s case at least, to want to be at the point of danger to help kill and repel the enemy.

Years before he composed *Pawn 883*, Draycot wrote an account of Sanctuary Wood (which he called 3rd Ypres, not being present at Passchendaele)⁶⁰⁰ on its third anniversary (1919). Whereas in *Pawn 883*, as the protagonist, Draycot seldom veers from his own experiences, in this article he feels free to talk about how the enemy appeared to the men of the PPCLI survivors who initially staunchly the German charge. During the bombardment,

Groups of men collected themselves in a sap, shell hole or a part of a trench which still afforded *some atom of safety*. From these diminutive forts, poured volley after volley after volley into the dense mass of the enemy whose stature was admirable but countenance goulish [sic] as a fiend of hell. Stoically our men held these posts and reinforced with machine guns, made terrible havoc among the enemy’s ranks.⁶⁰¹

The story sounds much more like something Munroe would have written regarding the enemy with their ghoulish, fiendish countenance, and is evidence of the way that veterans’ stories changed depending on *when* they were written and the audience they were addressing. Note also that the story uses euphemism and metaphor to explain how the men of the regiment had killed to themselves. Although everyone in the room knew that they had ultimately been murdering their fellow-man, Draycot characterizes it as making “terrible havoc” on fiends “of hell.”

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ “Overseas Board: Sgt. Draycot 883,” 3 Jul 1918, Service Record, RG150, box 2662, file 28, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=363546> (13 Aug 2017).

⁶⁰⁰ He also believed the word “tank” to be a vulgarization of “His Majesty’s Landships.” Draycot, “Pawn 883,” 200.

⁶⁰¹ W.M.L. Draycot, “Third Anniversary of Third Battle of Ypres [sic],” 4, 31(5)-4.

Nevertheless, he struggled with the moral implications of killing, and clearly had trouble swallowing the official party-line. Describing the speech of General Alderson which attended the PPCLI's transfer to the Canadian Corps on Nov 25th, 1915, Draycot recalls a comrade and friend named Private Lightbody, a divinity student who enlisted with the 1st University Company, voicing his disagreement with the simple moral argument that the General presented:

What he said would have been wiser if left unsaid. The pride of the "Pats" was hurt. Their heroic achievements "must be forgotten! – etc." As he uttered the words "Every man that dies on the field of battle – his Soul shall rise to Heaven!"... a voice, loud enough to be heard, from the ranks called out, "False Doctrine!" It was Lance Corporal Lightbody, student of Theology, a fearless, sincere young man. "Silence!" snapped a N.C.O. and the incident closed! but not forgotten.⁶⁰²

Corporal Lightbody died of wounds received at Sanctuary Wood. Although Draycot was the personification of old Bill, the time that elapsed between the war and writing his monograph gave him scope to delve further into that fundamentally sticky questions of the war and all wars, was it right to kill? As we have seen, in battle the question tended to retreat to the periphery as the imperative to kill or be killed was overwhelming, but outside the line and in the years after the war, men struggled with it.

In Draycot's account we see a deep and personal embitterment towards those who propagated the war, those who remained in safety behind the lines, and those who were incompetent:

"'Command!' that hellish, cold-blooded, relentless word, devoid of feeling. The puff-adder hiss of that self-important personage whom, attired in a galaxy of fabric and guilt, is oblivious to the fact, when uttering that fearsome word 'Command,' that he, bereft of his make-up stands naked, a mere mortal."⁶⁰³ For Draycot, the war was the realization of the futility and moral waste of the entire system

⁶⁰² Draycot, "Pawn 883," 72. Cluny James Lightbody, a divinity student prior to the war, was shot in the neck at Sanctuary Wood, and survived to return to the regiment a Lieutenant in October 1917. He died of wounds after shot shattered his left thigh and upper femur at Passchendaele (3rd Ypres). Cluny James Lightbody (410948), Service Record, RG150, box 5641, file 40, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=531351> (25 Aug 2017). Interesting to note that Munroe remembers the speech simply as, "He pronounced them the steadiest men he had seen," which was more in keeping with his narrative structure: perhaps both happened. Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 284.

⁶⁰³ Draycot, "Pawn 883," 42.

that made possible the war, and especially of those who profited from it behind the lines. Often the failings of the military to solve simple problems like the employment of men were humorous, like the one-eyed man directing traffic at a crossroads, to the somewhat inevitable consternation of the backed-up drivers.⁶⁰⁴

Draycot consistently focuses his disenchantment at the staff on two officers in particular, the Wallis brothers, Captain and Lieutenant H. Wallis who were the nephews of 7th Brigade commander, General Macdonell. They appear in Draycot's account as an archetype for the base-wallah whose unwillingness to undertake the suffering of their men and face the dangers of the front-line Draycot repeatedly scourges in his diary and monograph. At one point, Draycot claims, Captain Wallis had the audacity to question the veracity of Draycot's map of the front-line: "[Captain Wallis] points to a certain part of the firing line. On his map, obtained from the somnolent 3rd Division, the line is shown straight. On mine, obtained from personal observation, it is crooked. We argue. He commands. Orders! Me to straighten it."⁶⁰⁵ Draycot eventually prevailed by threatening to bring the matter before uncle Mac: "That is only one episode of many which occurred with this stubborn, inexperienced youth. Nepotism may be excusable in times of peace, but War demands the best brains for sake of efficiency – and men's lives."⁶⁰⁶ Draycot, as always, carried on about his own work in his own way, and he must have been a handful for the young Wallises, constantly showing them up, belittling their presumptuous world-view and understanding of the war with an old soldier's practiced insolence. These men were not alone as being scourged by Draycot, and his self-image as a fighting man of the Patricia's proved caustic when he had to deal with the "human fungi" he encountered behind the lines. As at the front with the Germans, he had to choose which fights to fight to enable him to accomplish his work. Like an infantryman's view

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 142

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 160.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

of civilians who failed to “do their duty,” front-line soldiers usually take the opportunity to separate themselves from the chaff of rear soldiers who are portrayed derisively.

He took especial umbrage with those personalities in powerful positions by birth or relationship. This included the Prime Minister (“Premier”). He accused Borden of viewing his tour of the front in 1917 as a hunting expedition:

It was on Friday, March 9th, 1918, that the Premier Minister of Canada, Sir Robert L. Borden paid a visit. He inspected the 7th Brigade at Bruay. Not that it mattered to us who came. He was but one of the directors of the corporation making an annual inspection. It is not recorded that anyone handed him a rifle to take a shot at the enemy, but why did the Hon. Walter Long, M.P., want to look us up next day and also take up the valuable time of Corps, Division and Brigade? Did he, too, come to hunt? Or to observe the hunters? Or a trench raid staged in their honour? Even in war prominent men must be entertained, even in the Battle Zone, at the expense of hindering operations... so it seemed.⁶⁰⁷

Borden’s diary entry for the day would seem to corroborate much of Draycot’s story, Borden was indeed present at the front, and met with officers all down the line, speaking to the men on occasion and watching the proceedings: “After luncheon” Currie had carried on to review and address the 7th Brigade, “then to fourth Div. under Watson and saw them rehearsing attack under barrage. Very interesting. Then reviewed 7th Brigade who looked very fit (Gen. MacDonald [sic]). Addressed them. Then saw attacking troops rehearse check by machine gun which they smothered with bombs.”⁶⁰⁸ It certainly was not recorded that Borden took a shot, although it seems eminently plausible and wholly in keeping with the way that the war generally, and killing specifically was presented. He is likely remembering Brigade-staff scuttlebutt.

Draycot tended to demonstrate bitterness towards those in political positions above him, including Aitken, or – as Draycot termed him, acerbically, the “Knight” – who commissioned one of his

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 184.

⁶⁰⁸ Robert Borden, “The Diaries of Sir Robert Borden, 1912-1918,” 9 Mar 1917. *Memorial University Research Repository* <http://research.library.mun.ca/2428/> (13 Aug 2017).

sketches of the ramparts at Ypres from General Macdonell.⁶⁰⁹ The request, coming shortly after the Battle of Sanctuary Wood and Draycot's recovery from his second nervous breakdown, was met with chagrin on the part of the sketcher: "An Artist? Why pick on me, when there's more than enough to do in maps and general intelligence work."⁶¹⁰ After being captured and released as a spy, and together with an orderly ("ever hear of a private having an orderly?!"), Draycot finally got down to sketching the ramparts and a panorama of the Ypres salient: "That sketching was no pleasant task. The enemy shells were falling into the moat and smashing the masonry of the Ramparts. So two men had to risk their life to appease a 'gallant' Knight in London! For what? For his book 'Canada in Flanders.'"⁶¹¹ The resulting sketch was a technical masterpiece of tactical significance that, if we are being wholly honest, should never have been published during the war, as it gives away the German position through the eyes of their enemy.⁶¹² That the caption of the published sketch should laud Sir Sam Hughes who "viewed the Ypres Salient from this spot" merely added to Draycot's consternation. The idea that his work, conducted under considerable threat, would be used as political propaganda at home fits perfectly with Draycot's embittering experience of the war.

The ramparts at Ypres, which Draycot sketched, are illustrative of the strategic problem the Germans had in their attempts to reduce the town. The thick, fifty-foot casements that surrounded the city proved solid defensive positions for four years of the war, and were never occupied by the Germans despite the thousands of lives spent in the attempt. They provided the key rear defensive positions with which the British and French withstood three serious attempts by the German army to break through to them, and a nearly continual effort to reduce them. The reason that the *Marquis d'Vauban*, Louis XIV's

⁶⁰⁹ "General Macdonell was eager to oblige the Knight." Draycot, "Pawn 883," 120.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 121.

⁶¹² On Aitken's battle with British censors over the publication of *Canada in Flanders*, and the history of and reasons for publishing material that might be considered operationally relevant see, Tim Cook, "Documenting War," 275-6.

master of siege warfare, had built these ramparts so stoutly was that he was thoroughly familiar with the art of taking and defending fortified positions, having been part of forty-eight sieges, including (but not limited to) Ypres itself. He thus understood what ultimately became the chief strategic problem of the First World War, how to maximize the efficiency of the siege in every area, but firstly in terms of human material: "Vauban identified the engineers' three most important measures of a siege's efficiency: its length, its financial costs, and its cost in human lives. Though each of these measures was to be minimized, Vauban focused most consistently on the last of these."⁶¹³ This would be the same imperative faced by commanders at Ypres throughout the war. But the scale of the siege, carried out across the continent and with millions of men, ultimately made it the perfect defensive trap, and the Ramparts at Ypres were an important hinge of those siege lines.

Whereas the Germans encountered the problem of how to reduce the garrison at Ypres, and ultimately occupy the town, the British had to figure out how to deal with the ever-present threat of enfilade, especially near Hill 60 and Mount Sorrel, where the Germans had constructed a fortified steel and concrete pillbox on the high ground. The Germans proved incapable of breaking through their siege of the town of Ypres during the war and the town thus proved to be an impregnable defensive position, despite the devotion of years and hundreds of thousands of lives in assaulting and defending it. Every conceivable artifice was attempted by the allies to wrest the dominant ridges surrounding the town from the Germans, but success did not come until they blew the positions up to kick off the Passchendaele offensives. Even then, and despite the scale of the detonations (the largest explosions in history up to that point), the advances were limited to the German front and second lines, and some of the danger points that Draycot describes were not dealt with.

⁶¹³ Jamal Ostwald, *Vauban Under Siege: Engineering Efficiency and Martial Vigor in the War of the Spanish Succession* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 50.

Beaverbrook's was not the only sketch that Draycot completed of positions in the Salient; he also drew a German fortified position known as "the Birdcage," which posed a sinister, panopticon threat to all who fell under its gaze. While sketching in Sanctuary Wood, Draycot suddenly found himself directly underneath of the "steel and concrete observation post and sniper's nest;" the emblematic eye of Sauron, and in its line of sight: "Forgetful, as we all are prone to become when engrossed in a subject, my mind being on my work led me forward... Something compelled me to turn around. *Horrors of Horrors! There was the Bird Cage – in full view!* Stupefied, my blood froze. He could see me. My position was likened to an oasis in the desert."⁶¹⁴ How exactly, does the oasis move? The birdcage loomed as ominously as a sniper's bullet above him while he wormed his way back towards cover, a sandbag over his head. It was Kafka and Foucault simultaneously and for real, the panopticon, the infinite power of the state and the men it armed, the infinite liability of the soldier.

There appear to have been two German strongpoints known as the birdcage, one east of Zillebeke Lake, which Draycot records, and one at the south end of the Salient near Armentières and "Plug Street." The one that Draycot describes cannot, based on his sketches and contemporary maps, be the same as that spoken of at Ploegsteert. The two positions form a sort of northern and southern boundary of the kickoff of the Messines/Passchendaele offensive in June 1917.⁶¹⁵ In this offensive, the tactical problem of the Germans' possession of the high ground was ultimately solved by using Canadian, British, and Australian miners and thousands of pounds of ammonal to blow up Hill 60 to the south, and a number of other nearby locales.⁶¹⁶ The southernmost birdcage (near Ploegsteert) was

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 100-1.

⁶¹⁵ Peter Barton, Peter Doyle, and Johan Vandewalle, *Beneath Flanders Fields: The Tunnellers' War, 1914-1918* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 165-168, map pg. 163. Draycot's sketches clearly indicate the Birdcage whose gaze he had been caught in was further south, nearer to the ramparts of Ypres. W.M.L. Draycot, "Ypres Salient Showing Enemy front line: taken from Bay 2 Trench 6," 8 May 1916, 26-31-5, NVMA. Ibid., "Panorama of Famous Ypres Salient: Sketch taken from the walls of the ramparts at Ypres, looking east towards the Firing Line," 2 Jun 1916.

⁶¹⁶ Vandewalle, *Beneath Flanders Fields*, 162-202.

mined, but it was not detonated as the British captured enough of the ridge to make the position untenable during the initial assault.⁶¹⁷

The men who manned (and constructed and demolished) the defenses around Ypres, were concentrated into a relatively tiny space that proved to be a strategically important killing ground for both sides throughout the war. Draycot's sketches, maps, intelligence work, and later narrative reflection upon this perpetually contested killing ground give some sense of the scope of the battlefield and the ways in which men carried on living and fighting within it, falling in to march "somewhere" and finding themselves on a cattle car to the Salient.

Not to belabour the obvious, but many of the chief PPCLI bloodlettings took place within a few kilometers of the ramparts of the town of Ypres. Birds flew easily from one side to the other, and both sides gained bird's eye perspectives of the conflict as they hurtled through the air in every child's fantasy, flying. The compactness of the battlespace near Ypres is made exquisitely if treasonably obvious in the sketch Aitken commissioned. From the ramparts, Draycot could sketch many of the positions of the Salient: Hooze and Chateau Wood, Zillebeke, Observatory Ridge, Sanctuary Wood, Mount Sorrel, Hill 60, Zillebeke Lake (still held by the British, although the line in front of Bellewaerde Lake had fallen to the Germans during the fighting at Frezenburg in 1915), Shrapnel Corner, St. Eloi, and away down south to France and Armentières via Ploegsteert. Battalions had small, familiar frontages, and men who survived as long as Draycot got to know the landscape well. Moreover, despite being so geographically bounded, the salient was also capable of absorbing seemingly endless destruction without successful reduction by either side. So long as the line held, reinforcements could always be brought in to stem the advance of any assault, as the Germans found out despite the use of poison gas in 1915 and flamethrowers in 1916, and as the British discovered despite their use of gigantic mines in

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 198. See also, James E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War based on Official Documents: Military Operations France and Belgium, 1917: Messines and Third Ypres (Passchendaele) 7 June - 10 November* (London: HMSO, 1948), 2:37-39.

1917. There were simply too many strong points and too many enemy soldiers to be subdued prior to jumping off.

One can only survive in an environment such as No Man's Land in the Ypres Salient for so long, and Draycot, like nearly everyone else who remained around long enough, was a man broken in spirit and maimed in body by the war. He suffered two complete "nervous breakdowns" during the war. As we have seen, immediately after Sanctuary Wood, Draycot moved back towards the front lines in a delirium before being hauled back to Brigade HQ insensate, the survivors' eternal question positing itself: Why did I live and my chums die? A picture of Draycot from after the war, sabre drawn and wearing his full kit and ribbons, is captioned "Sergeant W.M.L. Draycot soliloquising on his African campaigns. The dog, at the end of walk keeps a safe distance."⁶¹⁸ Like Munroe, Papineau, and Christie, Draycot was fond of dogs. He also evidently could terrify them whilst soliloquizing (as Bobbie had been plagued by nightmares of the war).

His second breakdown occurred during the winter of 1916. His diary entry for November 8th, a period where he was employed making secret maps and touring the front-lines during his third winter of the war, details his immediate thoughts: "On morning of 8th I have a nervous breakdown & feel as if I am going mad. Get into open air and try to walk it off. Tis' raining hard, my limbs stiffen & I lay down in a disused dugout in agony. My chums find me & want to send for a doctor but I refuse as army doctors know but little & care less. Very weak at night."⁶¹⁹ In his monograph, he cites the near burst of a shell as the immediate etiology of his breakdown, but also records the keen horror of having men on either side of him killed.

Many men killed around me... Hell reigns supreme all day. It is difficult to sketch our immediate front and the country in rear of the enemy – but it was done!... As the ground was muddy and my field glasses would be rendered useless if placed thereon a request was made to the man on

⁶¹⁸ Draycot, "Journal," 7-8 Nov 1916.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

my right, "Hold these a minute, please, quick. Take them!" Alas! My words were directed to a dead man. He had a bullet hole in his forehead.⁶²⁰

Draycot then discovered that the man on the other side of him was also dead: "His right cheek bone was a bullet hole from which a thin streak of blood ran down his face."⁶²¹ He made it back to friendly lines where he was shelled, and broke down for the second time, although he was not evacuated because, as he recalls, he was too important to the staff.

It was not until after the Battle of Vimy Ridge that Draycot got too sick to remain at the front. He caught a strong dose of gas on the Vimy sector, and "the feeling of having swallowed broken glass stayed with me. My head was like a ball of quicksilver that wouldn't stop oscillating. Eyes were trying to outdo the bulging of a crab's optics."⁶²² He was again informed that he was too "urgently needed" to be evacuated. It was not for another four days that a Doctor, "worried over my continual vomiting of blood and attendant high temperature," decided to evacuate him down the line to the "dreamland" of a bed with white sheets at No. 2 Australian General Hospital.⁶²³ But upon reaching the train to Blighty, Draycot again records being filled with remorse over leaving his friends: "A desire to return to the scene of battle overcame me. The mud, the noise, din of cannon roar, activity, life death; let me get back to my comrades. My brain was a maelstrom of wild thoughts."⁶²⁴ These thoughts were common to many soldiers on leaving the battle-zone. They evidence the fact that men could want to go back to the front to kill or die despite the danger. Nevertheless, Draycot would never return to the front. After a long, convoluted, and thoroughly demoralizing convalescence in England, he was invalided to Canada in September 1918.

⁶²⁰ Draycot, "Pawn 883," 155.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Ibid., 217.

⁶²³ Ibid., 218.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

Draycot finishes his manuscript by openly addressing the question of the morality and ethics of killing: his understanding of what and how wars are started seems as applicable today as it does for those who fought the First World War. Draycot posits an open question about the phraseology of the 6th Commandment “Thou shalt not kill” and “Do no Murder,” the latter being the favoured distinction of the commandment throughout the war.⁶²⁵ He posits two cases or “Trends of Thought.” The first involves a boy in Canada whose mother had read the writing on the wall during the “days of Conscription,” and decided the most sensible course of action to avoid his being drafted was to dress him in “Knickerbockers, and sent him a safe distance away. . . to School!” The second case involved “NINE young men of London, England, all of one family, went to War. THEY LIE DEAD IN FLANDERS FIELDS! This unique [sic?] but gruesome record appeared in the newspapers of that City.” He deems that, based on the “actual wording” of the commandments, the former lady was right. The latter, “had obeyed the Laws of the Courts, while the woman in the first case [sic] had obeyed the Laws of Moses. You have your own interpretation of the English Language... despite the Dictionary! Who’s RIGHT?”⁶²⁶ Ultimately, the conclusion that Draycot reaches is that,

as long as [the people] are willing to be gulled by the wrong sort of Master Minds they will be forced, against their better judgement, to KILL. Orders must be obeyed, otherwise. . . ! It is Natural for the strong-willed, determined, avaricious, cunning mortal to aspire to power... Therefore, as we are so constituted and 20,000 men and WOMEN viciously scramble to enter an arena to see two men tear each other apart so must we expect to continue to send our Best Blood, the Stamina of the Race, to War. It needs but little to arouse the Blood Lust within us. The Thinker, Scientist, Student, all know. To YOU WHO WILL NOT THINK. . . Go to WAR, and Taste it’s [sic] Bitter Cup! What? You DONT [sic] Want To? Then THINK. . . And you WONT! [sic]⁶²⁷

Note here that Draycot describes his soldiering as a will to power. He, being a cunning mortal, had wanted to taste the power that war gives soldiers, but – as we have seen, he ultimately found it a “bitter

⁶²⁵ Grossman repeated this distinction at his 2008 lecture to B Coy 2 PPCLI. No one present yelled “false doctrine,” at least within the author’s hearing. Dennis Power, “Preparing for Physiological, Psychological Effects of War: Knowledge helps Afghanistan-bound troops recognize when a peer needs help,” *The Maple Leaf*, 20 Feb 2008, 11.

⁶²⁶ Draycot, “Pawn 883,” 254.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 255.

cup.” Nothing has changed in one hundred years, and all the while, humans have continued to develop ever more comprehensive forms of bloody-sport or bloody-drama to consume.

Chapter 7: Jack McLaren and the PPCLI Comedy Company – Princess Pat’s Jesters

Walter Draycot was plucked out of the regiment because of his artistic ability and training that allowed him to portray, accurately, the landscapes of war and thus aid in killing enemy soldiers, the ultimate job of the organization, by providing tactically relevant material; Jack McLaren was similarly employed at the regimental level because of his artistic training and ability to execute sketches, but a different kind of artistry eventually elevated him into a position away from the front-lines. Like Jim Christie, McLaren worked with the snipers and, on at least one occasion, successfully fired at a group of Germans while under the command of the Yukon sniper. Unlike Christie, Munroe, and, to a lesser extent Draycot, McLaren is never remembered within the vein of killing as he devoted the overwhelming majority of his post-war remembrances to his service as an entertainer of killers. By not speaking of the killing, or rather speaking of it through dramatic pause and subtext, Jack McLaren joins most PPCLI veterans here studied who do not directly identify themselves as killers. McLaren describes his performances as holding a mirror up to the troops themselves on stage with the PPCLI Comedy Company. The name is important as it identifies the men as combat soldiers, company men, which they mostly were (the single exception being Paymaster Captain Pembroke). The spectacle of the show tends to draw the spotlight away from their service as regular infantry soldiers of the line, as he – and the rest of the company – tended to be asked and speak about their experiences with the Comedy Company to the exclusion of their time with the fighting companies. But they were company soldiers, and they served in some of the biggest battles the regiment fought. By examining the example of those who did not speak of killing to understand how they did, in fact, understand killing and present it to their audience in a palatable form, as subtext, we can begin to see how most veterans likewise composed their remembrances. Moreover, the service record and remembrances of McLaren and the Comedy Company can be examined to understand how men who spent time professionally making fun of the war could also spend time professionally making war upon the enemy.

McLaren had made a serious study of art prior to the war. He began by studying architecture but, finding it too constrictive, went on to study fine art at the University of Edinburgh and returned to Toronto with a BA in June 1914. The war found him holidaying at Lake Simcoe scarcely two months later. He had originally enlisted in the CEF when the war broke out, and was training at Valcartier when he contracted “a bout of the jaundice”⁶²⁸ and was taken to the overgrown, understaffed and entirely unfinished “marquee tent which was dignified with the name ‘hospital.’ ... The grass grew high, obscuring the beds there. A few doctors, no nurses, and an unimpressive rear-rank riff-raff of buck privates formed the staff.”⁶²⁹ He realized he would be putting his health in serious jeopardy if he stayed in the tent so he just up and left: “I stealthily put my clothes on and hightailed it out of Valcartier and back to Toronto for a dependable medical attention.”⁶³⁰ McLaren chose to convalesce at his family’s cabin in Muskoka, and his choice to abscond from the training camp likely saved his life. While convalescing, he was active in putting on amateur theatricals with his friend Professor Alfred Baker of the University of Toronto, one of which was attended by Professor James Mavor.⁶³¹ After McLaren recovered his health he enlisted in the 4th University Company, then being raised to reinforce the PPCLI. Professor Mavor wrote to Agar Adamson telling him of his yet-to-arrive private’s abilities as a performer and landscape artist.⁶³² Adamson, who was McLaren’s “patron Saint of the arts,” deigned to ask McLaren for a song during a long and punishing route march upon cobblestones.⁶³³ Eventually he found a permanent gig singing songs to soldiers.

⁶²⁸ McLaren, *JW*, 15. His condition was later “promoted to Hepatitis.”

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶³¹ Adamson has it that McLaren took up acting to impress Mavor’s daughter, Dora: “Lance Corporal McLaren is a gentleman and was in love with Dora Mavor but Mrs. M. did not approve. He took up acting to be able to play with Dora [double entendre].” Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 16 Jun 1918, 336.

⁶³² McLaren, *JW*, 15. See also, McLaren, “Speech to the Montreal PPCLI Association,” 2.

⁶³³ McLaren describes Adamson as “fresh as the morning dew whilst he kept his horse happy by whisking the flies away from it with his whisk... he looked down his equestrian Olympus and called ‘Come on McLaren give us a song.’” *Ibid.*

McLaren was thus one of the men who had responded to the exhortations of Talbot Papineau (among many others) and joined up with the University Companies specifically to reinforce the regiment in France. Prior to the war, Professors C.M. McKergow and V.I. Smart had established courses that would “qualify students for commissions in the Canadian Militia or, under certain conditions, in the British Regular Army,” even giving academic credit for the completion of such courses.⁶³⁴ When the war broke out the decision was made to expand these courses and enlist men into as many companies as could be raised from universities across the country, to be dispatched to the front at the behest of the commanders in the field. Recruited in early 1915, with the news of the gassing of the Canadians at Ypres and the sinking of the *Lusitania* fresh to mind, recruits were forthcoming.⁶³⁵ Five University Companies were raised to reinforce the PPCLI at a time when the regiment was desperately short of men due to the bloodletting at Frezenburg (a battle in which the regiment suffered two times more casualties proportionally to any of the other yearly battles at Ypres including Passchendaele).⁶³⁶

The recruits, uniformly of “student age and type who [found] such a comradeship congenial,” were an outstanding body of men. Hugh Niven believed that the university men imbued the regiment with a special and unique character: “No one appreciates more the untold value our University reinforcements during the First World War meant to the PPCLI, it put us in a class by ourselves and everyone knew it, could see it and appreciate it.”⁶³⁷ He recalls that fully 123 men who had engineering qualification were taken out of the ranks and made officers in the Royal Engineers:

A British Army General... came to our camp... and asked me (I was OC at the time) if we had any Engineer Mining graduates in the ranks... All graduates in Mining would instantly become Lieuts in Royal Engineers and receive £100 to buy uniform and sent to London at once. I told the RSM to parade the Regiment and the Engineer General spoke to them and explained everything about the coming offensive on the Somme. 123 Graduates took two paces forward (I thought the General would have a fit) I explained that all our recruits were University Graduates – Trucks

⁶³⁴ O.B. Rexford, “Major M.M. McKergow a Tribute,” 31(1)-9.

⁶³⁵ See for example, Flavelle, “The Battle of 2nd Ypres,” 308-9.

⁶³⁶ Hugh Niven quoted in, Hodder-Williams, *PPCLI*, 2 vols., 1:72.

⁶³⁷ Niven to MacGregor, 27 Mar 1965, 31(53.2)-9.

rolled up two days later... and off they went to London... I telegraphed for a University Company in England to join the Regiment at once. That[']s the way we won the War.⁶³⁸

Here we see that short-sighted assertion so common to Niven and other members of the regiment, that they had won the war, if not singlehandedly, then by the promulgation of their way of doing things throughout the BEF and CEF (in that order). One of those who died at the Somme offensive, where the primarily university men of the PPCLI CC played to the battalions fresh from the line, was Milton Marshall. The *Victoriana War Supplement* (a book published in honour of those who joined from Victoria College in Toronto) sums up his life in a short statement that might equally apply to many of those who joined the University Companies: "His story is well told by the fact that he entered College in October and enlisted in December. The intervening months revealed him as a man of unusual ability, whose ruling passion was devotion to the duty of the hour."⁶³⁹

McLaren's reputation as an artist had preceded him thanks to Mavor's letter and, after initially being billeted with 7 Platoon No. 2 Company, he was transferred to the Sniper section to execute topographical sketches.⁶⁴⁰ Before the formal creation of the PPCLI CC, McLaren was given specialist duties that allowed him greater freedom of movement than he otherwise would have had in a rifle company: "I was assigned to draw maps of the local terrain, no-mans land and Fritz's trenches, and also when we had finished a tour in the trenches and we went back to the reserve area, I was to organize little impromptu concerts and entertainments."⁶⁴¹

While with the snipers, McLaren met Jim Christie and, as we have seen, Christie was keenly aware of his duty as head of the PPCLI sharpshooters to inspire his men in their efforts to take life.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ "Aubrey Milton Marshall," *Acta Victoriana War Supplement 1919*, copy, 31(19)-9.

⁶⁴⁰ McLaren, "Bastedo Questionnaire," 10 Dec 1963, 31(2)-9.

⁶⁴¹ McLaren, "Speech to the Montreal PPCLI Association," 3.

McLaren remembered him as a “small, tough man... who was a resourceful and energetic leader”⁶⁴² and helped to put at least one of his schemes into action:

One of his adroit plans was to drive 4 inch flat pieces of wood into the ground in “no-mans land” just in front of the German front-line trench. Those pieces of wood were painted with luminous paint on the side facing our trenches. We trained our guns on the glowing stakes, – at night when the Germans moved about in front of the luminous sticks the light effect was blacked out, and we pulled the triggers of our rifles, *to destroy our enemies in great numbers*. Christie made us blacken our faces for night patrol and when a star shell went up we all remained frozen stiff. [Emphasis added]⁶⁴³

This is the only story that J.W. McLaren remembers of a specific instance of his participation in a specific mission designed to kill the enemy, although he intimates that there were others. It is also one of the few insights he grants us of his personal front-line service. Here we see cold, incidental killing of the type that Christie excelled at and which he taught and led so effectively. McLaren, as an infantryman, was liable to be tasked to kill the enemy whenever presented with the opportunity.

McLaren’s front-line service was not negligible, but like so many of the soldiers who survived the war, McLaren chose to focus on anecdotes and remembrances of the good times, or rather the hilarious times. We have seen how Papineau, Munroe, Christie, and Draycot all spent varying periods outside the line convalescing, on leave, or otherwise employed: McLaren, despite the patently unmartial (or *faux-martial*) character of his employment with the PPCLI CC, was no different. On paper, McLaren and most of the troupe remained private soldiers of the King and Patricia’s regiment. They were infantrymen first, and although not quite willing to volunteer for front-line service, they were resigned to the fact that the show would eventually have to end, and that they would be sent back to their companies.

The work that the soldiers of the regiment performed was overwhelmingly geared towards the “dirty work” of killing, and the theme could not remain entirely absent from their performances. Take for example the Dumbells song “Dirty Work” recorded after the war (the PPCLI CC and official 3rd

⁶⁴² Ibid.

⁶⁴³ McLaren, *JW*, 17.

Canadian Divisional show, the “Dumbells” merged just prior to the armistice, see below). In it, Jack McLaren and the other Dumbells offer their services for murder and other forms of “dirty work” at very attractive rates. The song speaks to the war, and the fears of civilians towards returned soldiers. It also speaks to the underlying motivations of men to kill other men, and very likely refers directly to McLaren’s experience with Christie:

We’re here we’re here,/ do you want any murders done today?/ do y’ hear do y’ hear,/ do you want anybody put out of the way,/ call in the old established firm,/ your good old friends in need,/ families waited on daily and the best work guaranteed./ [refrain] Do you want any dirty work,/ done any dirt today?/... Here we are ready and willing to get your enemies all for a shilling/...*pay us the money and up we’ll creep/ black the face* while he’s asleep,/ and swear she was kissing the chimney sweep,/ have you done any dirty work today? [Emphasis added]⁶⁴⁴

Of course, this version of the song featured sound effects of the criminals breaking into a safe, and whip cracks to simulate gunshots. The content of the song clearly originates in and speaks to the experiences of the men at the front as killers, men who were paid a dollar ten a day to blacken the face and creep up upon the men of the Kaiser. The best men for the job are members of the “old established firm” willing to work rain or shine to solve whatever problem needs murdering.

McLaren and the other talented men in the company would present their version of the war on stage to everyone from the lousiest private soldier to the King of England himself. The true patron of the arts of the Comedy Company was the CO of the regiment, whomever that man happened to be, and the COs played a far more direct role in the decision of when to employ the men of the Comedy Company in the line than would normally be the case for private soldiers (whose movements would be dictated primarily by the chain-of-command). The creation and continuing existence of the troupe is an example of what Norman Mailer called a commander’s “papal dispensation,” his power to occasionally

⁶⁴⁴ “Red” Newman Orchestra, “Dirty Work (sound recording),” Originals Review: Rapid Fire (Montreal: Gram-O-Phone Co., 1923). The *Virtual Gramophone: Canada’s Historical Sound Recordings* <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/m2/f7/10016.mp3> (15 Aug 2017). The lyrics taken from above are assumed to be roughly the same as those sung by the PPCLI CC when they sang a song of the same title. “Oct 26 [1916] Barlin [Set List],” 39(1)-1.

choose certain men to be employed solely for the commander's own comfort and amusement.⁶⁴⁵

However, such dispensations were not to interfere with the fighting qualities of the regiment, and in the case of the Comedy Company, the goals of high morale and fighting efficiency, the relationship was synergistic. Throughout their service, they remained one step away from "the soul's incarceration by some misguided sergeant-major."⁶⁴⁶

Modris Eksteins' description of the opening-night performance of the *Sacre du Printemps* by Diaghilev's *ballets russes* (starring Nijinsky) can be contrasted with McLaren's opening night performance which he calls the "battle of Steenvoerde." Both talk of the necessity to wage war on and with the audience. At the first presentation of *Le Sacre* the audience had as much of a role in the performance as the performers. Indeed, in their violent and uproarious response to the bizarre new dance steps and orchestral arrangement, the audience played "the role that was written for it."⁶⁴⁷ The language of one contemporary is telling: "then ensued a battery of screams, countered by a foil of applause. We warred over art."⁶⁴⁸ Eksteins believes that "the image of the dancers dancing to the noise of the audience is wonderful and telling. The audience was as much a part of this famous performance as the *corps de ballet*."⁶⁴⁹ He also intimates that the role of the audience in the performance was the very element that prefigured the First World War. Unlike the divided at the *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées* who had warred over the stylistic decisions of the composers, the absence of traditional or comprehensible rhythm and the scandalous decision to have the dancers dance with inward pointing toes (an affront to the gracefulness of the art of dance), the PPCLI CC had been forced to fight over questions of the soldier's freedom to do as he saw fit after being relieved from the trenches.

⁶⁴⁵ Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* (New York: Harry Holt and Company, Inc., (1948) 1998), 312-13.

⁶⁴⁶ J.W. McLaren, "Mirth and Mud Part III: In which the Curtain is Rung Down on the 'Comic Relief' of the Greatest Drama in History," *Maclean's Magazine*, 15 May 1929, 20.

⁶⁴⁷ Eksteins, *The Rites of Spring*, 22.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

The soldiers who stormed into the hall in Steenvoorde had recently been through one of the hardest tours the regiment had ever faced at Sanctuary Wood, a battle that the men of the Comedy Company had avoided while rehearsing their show behind the lines (although they were shelled by long-range artillery spotted by airplane). These were men who had recently undergone some version of the horrors that Draycot experienced; men who had shot advancing German flamethrower-men before they spread liquid fire over their new, hastily constructed and reinforced, front-line trench at Warrington Avenue. Bastedo narrates the epic fight that the men of the Patricia's fought to secure this new front-line, and the death of the commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Buller,

Some one on the parados of Warrington Avenue was rallying the students. "Varsity! Hold that line!"... and there stood Treff. "Follow the Colonel. This way my lucky lads! Follow the Colonel!"... [He] advanced on the parapet, waving his men on with a slender cane. Brave, dramatic, but fatal was this last advance... Warrington Ave. was held, its defence cementing a bond between the two great divisions of the Battalion's personnel... The flamenwerfers were pouring a stream of fire ahead, over the dead and living. Cpl Cushing exclaimed "*I got him*," as a flame-throwing German toppled over. Two others were brought down by rifle fire. [Emphasis added]⁶⁵⁰

The two "great divisions" within the regiment might have healed, but that just united them in their acrimony towards the performance of a show they did not wish to attend, put on by men who had been absent from the show that had "cemented" the regiment's survivors together as never before.

The officers of the regiment had wanted to provide a light diversion in support of their efforts to aid the enlisted man to spend the least possible amount of time in abject drunkenness out of the line, which was why they got up the Comedy Company in the first place.⁶⁵¹ As McLaren remembered, "The month is June. The summer weather is beautiful... half of the Princess Pats had been made to forego

⁶⁵⁰ William Bastedo, "For Chapter on *Sanctuary Wood and Mount Sorrel*," 16(1.1)-1.

⁶⁵¹ For example, Papineau writes that "It occurs that men may leave their billets *considerably under the influence of liquor*. These men should be placed under arrest at once but they may be taken into the trench unless they are unable to walk. No one can upon any pretext be permitted to fall out. If a man should declare he was unable to proceed on account of illness he may be left with an N.C.O. and a note signed by the officer addressed to the Battalion Medical Office who will presumably [be] at the rear of the Battalion. If the man should be returned to duty he should be severely dealt with. Papineau, "Part II Trench Warfare," 36.

such pleasant surroundings and instead fall in and parade to an entertainment some six kilometres from their billets.”⁶⁵² The men had also recently been paid “20 crisp, one-franc notes” and felt the lure of the *estaminet*. The Comedy Company was thus faced with a united and determined enemy, and McLaren got something of an insight into how it might have felt to be a German.

we were busy putting on our make-up and costumes, when the air outside the hall was rent with turbulence and noisy ejaculations of a mob, who, to put it mildly, seemed out of hand. We could hear the “enemy’s” approach, proclaimed with loud curses and bristling obscenities. *To be on the Canadian side during a raid on the German trenches is one thing, but to be the opposition and hear those lads shoving and mauling each other to avenge themselves on us... was another matter.* [Emphasis added]⁶⁵³

Again, we see the primacy of a betrayal of *thémis* or “what’s fair” as the centre-point and chief motivator of the mob’s murderous intent. If they were forced to go where they did not want to be, they would overcome the situation by “avenging” themselves upon the “enemy.” But, much like the regiment in the line, the PPCLI Comedy Company was not wholly unprepared for the coming contest. And they had a secret weapon, the beautiful “girls” of the beauty chorus.

As they would have for any tactical engagement, the men of the PPCLI CC prepared their weapons and equipment for the coming battle, developed and rehearsed a plan, and carried it out despite the enemy’s efforts to the contrary. Leonard Young, a truly talented young man borrowed from the 9th Field Ambulance (with which he would later lose a leg), began with a piano solo that was utterly shouted down by the crowd. Next, a “Burlesque on Uncle Tom” was the first comedic salvo fired. The skit, taken from vaudeville, was a popular black-face slapstick number that speaks, comedically, about what it was to die every time you went on stage. For example, one character’s opening line likely struck a responsive chord in the audience: “I’m Little Eva. I’ve died twice a day in Uncle Tom’s Cabin shows for

⁶⁵² McLaren, “Mirth and Mud Part I,” 47.

⁶⁵³ McLaren, “Mirth and Mud Part I,” 47.

the past fifty-one years, and all I get is ten per and cakes.”⁶⁵⁴ At one point, when Uncle Tom’s “master” is beating him with a slap-stick (for which purpose he bought Tom in the first place), Eva interjects to tell him not to beat him, “with that—not with that! Take an axe—he deserves it.” Then there are several cakewalks, and a fourth wall aside about cake-walks.⁶⁵⁵ Then little Eva is hung, “(T:) O, that’s all right, Miss Eva. It’s a pleasure to see you die—no trouble at all. (D:) Shut up, both of yez! Yer delayin’ the game. (Takes end of rope and snaps it on Eva’s belt.) Now, Tom, give us a lift, and we’ll soon have Eva up where she belongs. (Both pull until rope is tight.)”⁶⁵⁶ We know that this is roughly the same as the skit the PPCLI CC performed because the period prop book, playbills, and set notes given by Norman Clarke to the regiment agree with the text as far as props and cues are concerned.⁶⁵⁷ To a present-day audience the skit does not seem particularly funny, but evidently the soldiers watching the Steenvoorde performance liked it enough to abate somewhat in their fury, many adopting the “go ahead and make me laugh” attitude.⁶⁵⁸ McLaren describes the actors’ fight as akin to going forward into battle. While firing their lines at the enemy audience, they had “put their ears well back and gritted their teeth in sheer determination.”⁶⁵⁹ Then, to the strains of “The Spaniard that Blighted My Life” sung by Captain Pembroke (a song about revenge and murder), the beauty chorus was introduced.⁶⁶⁰ Employing the metaphor of the ring, McLaren remembers that, “We had them taking the count and as docile as a dormouse.”⁶⁶¹ The soldiers simply could not resist being graced by the presence of ladies – ladies

⁶⁵⁴ Text taken from, Harry L. Newton, “A Burlesque on Uncle Tom’s Cabin” (Chicago: Will Rossiter, 1903). *Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture* <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/onstage/scripts/osplhlnat.html> (15 Aug 2017).

⁶⁵⁵ “I have just ordered the undertaker to come and see that Eva does her getaway in first-class shape. As he is not here I will do a cake-walk out and look for him.” Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid. Norman Clarke, “Property Book,” transcr. Norman D. Clarke, 8, 39(2)-1. McLaren indicates that their version of the sketch was “served up in the army vernacular.” McLaren, *JW*, 23.

⁶⁵⁷ Clarke, “Property Book,” 8.

⁶⁵⁸ McLaren, “Mirth and Mud Part I,” 47.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁰ The original iteration of the comedy company consisted of Captain Pembroke, and Privates T.J. Lilly, J.W. McLaren, Stanley Morrison, Cunningham, Fred Fenwick, and P.D. Ham, with Norman Clarke as “Property Man” and Leonard Clarke of the 9th Field Ambulance on Piano. Clarke, “Property Book,” 1.

⁶⁶¹ McLaren, “Mirth and Mud Part I,” 47.

wearing gowns (and wearing them well) that Princess Patricia herself had donated to the cause, singing about murdering the man who “stole” their wives or sweethearts. These fit, good looking young men were talented actors, and they made fit, good looking young women: especially the “saucy” Fred Fenwick and the svelte Stanley Morrison. The battle was won by women,⁶⁶² because battles were fought for women.⁶⁶³ War and modern art gave outlet to that most puerile of boyhood fantasies, which never really fades away – nobility of purpose in the face of death that made them worthy of the love of women. In the case of the Canadian infantryman this nobility was often cloaked in regal robes, literally – if ironically – for the Comedy Company.

“The Spaniard that Blighted My life” was a popular song because it touched on elements that were important to men’s conception of themselves as fighting soldiers. H.P. Maddison, an original who survived the war, for example wrote Bastedo from the Roslyn Lodge in Edmonton to reminisce about singing it while still training in Canada: “You will remember the gang singing ‘Spagoni’ every morning to drown out the Pipers at reveille?[sic]”⁶⁶⁴ The song is comedic ballad of revenge against Alphonso Spagoni, the Toreador who “pinched my future wife,” and tells the tale of a happy would-be murderer traveling the world in search of revenge:

...Yes, when I catch Spagoni/He will wish that he'd never been born/And for this special reason/My stiletto I've fetched out of pawn/Oh yes! Oh yes!/So tonight there will be dirty work/[refrain] If I catch Alphonso Spagoni, the Toreador/With a mighty swipe I will dislocate his bally jaw!/I'll find this bullfighter, I will/And when I catch the bounder/*The blighter I'll kill/He shall die!/He shall die!/He shall die tiddly-i-ti-ti-ti-ti-ti-ti!/He shall die! He shall die!/For I'll raise a bunion on his Spanish onion*⁶⁶⁵/ If I catch him bending tonight! [Emphasis added]⁶⁶⁶

The song explains something of what men were thinking about while they entrained and marched off into France and Belgium: violence, revenge and women in roughly reverse order. They were out to do

⁶⁶² Men dressed as women.

⁶⁶³ At least, as we have seen, in the men’s minds.

⁶⁶⁴ H.P. Maddison to Alex Rennie, 16 Feb 1976, 31(11)-9.

⁶⁶⁵ Cause a lump on his head.

⁶⁶⁶ Billy Merson, “The Spaniard that Blighted my Life,” 1911. *International Lyrics Playground* <http://lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/t/thespianiardthatblightedmylife.shtml> (15 Aug 2017).

“dirty work”, a phrase that recurs in veterans’ testimony and the songs of the PPCLI CC. They were also in France and England to protect or acquire women and protect their honour (officially at least).

Revenge for wrongs committed to women, of every type, was a powerful motivator for men to kill, indeed – as the song points out – it was often the foundation of their conception of how the thing was to be done.

The PPCLI CC version of the ballad saw Paymaster Pembroke together with the “Powerful Beauty Chorus” sing “Spagoni” or “The Spaniard that Blighted my Life” as part of the Comedy Company’s first revue “Stop that Noise” throughout the fall of 1916. They knew that it was a hit when supported by the beautiful “ladies” of the troop, because it emphasised the idea that a man who was willing to fight for his woman, in this case Pembroke in the role of a vengeful stiletto wielder, would find other beautiful women surrounding him and listening to his stories. This was the hope and reality of many front-line soldiers. That it tended not to be Spaniards, but Germans who “blighted” their lives, did not detract from the central message of the righteousness of revenging a wrong towards women through violence. There was always a foreigner of some description threatening your love, and many of the skits demonstrated both. Surviving PPCLI CC playbills indicate that soldiers of the PPCLI, 60th, 49th, 42nd Battalions and the Royal Flying Corps took in the PPCLI CC show containing “Spagoni” in August and September 1916.⁶⁶⁷ At these shows, men who did not know the tale of the horny Toreador could sing along with men who did know it.

Some of the songs that they sang say much about how soldiers fought and died. Even though their references to fighting, dying, and killing were often covert and coded, they certainly existed in the repertoire of the Comedy Company.⁶⁶⁸ It was difficult to perform honestly for the war’s actors without

⁶⁶⁷ “The P.P.C.L.I. Comedy Co present their latest Revue ‘Stop That Noise!’,” 31(2)-1.

⁶⁶⁸ In his history of the Dumbells and the PPCLI CC Wilson argues that “some topics (such as killing and dying) would remain largely taboo.” Jason Wilson, *Soldiers of Song: The Dumbells and Other Canadian Concert Parties of the First World War* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 2. Cook drawing from a wider

acknowledging its cruelest realities, and the PPCLI CC did address them, by making a joke of the whole thing:

The captain said we're cornered boys,/so fight like hell you must. /I kissed her photograph and/ then they couldn't see me for dove./[refrain] *And with the photo of the girl I left behind me,/ I rushed into the thickest of the fray.*/ When the captain said we're out of ammunition,/ I'm afraid its going to be a losing day./ I said don't worry over ammunition please,/ I've something far more terrible you'll find./ I'll rush amongst the enemy and frighten them to death,/ with the photo of the girl I left behind. [Emphasis added]⁶⁶⁹

Here was something that everyone could laugh at; something that called to mind the girl you missed, a memory unique to each soldier, but shared because most every man in the ranks had a girl he left behind of some description, a memory you took with you into the very teeth of enemy soldiers. But a soldier shedding a tear over a photograph before going over the top to be killed is not funny; a German soldier shedding a tear over the same photograph is uproarious. The men of the Comedy Company replaced much of the melodrama, tragedy, and horror of battle with its comedic equivalent, farce and black humour, and they had plenty of material to work with.

Fresh from the bloody Battle of Courcelette, the last gasp of Haig's failed breakthrough turned battle of attrition that the Canadians helped to temporarily conclude, here was something that every man amongst them could laugh at. The laughing helped the men return to the front and face the challenges of the war in a more amenable frame of mind:

In this place the P.P.C.L.I. Comedy Company did some of their best work. Men who had been in the battle of the Somme just two hours before would make up the audience. Some of the bandaged heads or arms in a sling or just a touch of shell shock. How those lads enjoyed the shows. Possibly the finest compliment came from the C.O. of a dressing station over the road

selection of songs then those performed by concert parties finds that men did sing of killing but not often. Cook, "The Singing War," 235-6. Cook notes that frontline soldiers took pleasure in "*schadenfreude* with an edge" with some of their humour, and that it "could also be directed at the enemy to rationalize the killing process and to make it less cold-hearted." For example, he quotes a joke from the brazier directed at the Germans: "Hun: (shouting across to the Canadians): 'Say, do you know Ottawa?' Canadian: 'Yes.' Hun: 'Well, I've got a wife and three kiddies in Ottawa.' Canadian: 'Just put your head over the parapet for a minute and you'll have a widow and three orphans in Ottawa.'" Cook, "I will meet the world with a smile and a joke," 54-5.

⁶⁶⁹ Ernest Le Messurier (tenor), "The photo of the girl I left behind [sound recording]," Dumbell's Revue: "Ace High" (Toronto: Leo Feist Ltd., 1925). *The Virtual Gramophone* <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/m2/f7/16718.mp3> (15 Aug 2017).

who came across one day and said: “You boys are doing more for the troops than I can. Keep it up.”⁶⁷⁰

Laughing helped make things real again, and helped soldiers deal with the things that they had only recently realized were real: friends who would not survive the war, corpses, live German soldiers firing or surrendering or being killed. The PPCLI CC sang to men who had been through all that and were able to lift their spirits and reaffirm their desire to be there.

In the performances of the PPCLI CC, the fighting exists off stage but very much present to mind, much as it does in many of the soldiers’ songs of the First World War and much of soldiers’ anecdotal history after the war. It’s a long way to Tipperary, we are told, and – even though this most famous soldier’s song of a war of songs quickly fell out of favour amongst front-line British soldiers⁶⁷¹ – there is an important message to be gleaned from the very distance the soldiers felt from Tipperary. By focusing the singer’s (and hearer’s) attention on the long, long road that lay ahead, the song implicitly focuses the mind on the fighting that must take place after they march off. If it is a long road to Tipperary, it is one that must necessarily include enough enemy combatants killed as to allow for the resumption of peace.

McLaren recalls singing the song upon disembarkation at Le Havre in his dedication of the article to those who got the joke. He also presents thirty-seven other armyisms, or short vignettes of life in the British Army, inside jokes of a soldier’s life that characterized his experience at the front. But not once does he mention killing. He focuses on the prosaic parts of army life, the little jokes like refusing “a job at the London Pay Office,” an old NCO’s trick to find volunteers for less-than-pleasant tasks like latrine digging. McLaren makes clear that the first thing he did, prior to learning not to volunteer for cushy jobs, was to “volunteer to become a target.” He had then been “taught his left foot from his right[,]... solve[d] the mystery of the Webb equipment,” and would soon be drinking French coffee, “speak[ing]

⁶⁷⁰ McLaren, “Mirth and Mud Part II,” 16.

⁶⁷¹ Wilson, *Soldiers of Song*, 18.

unkindly to a poor dumb mule” and shouting “‘OO La La’ at every French mademoiselle.”⁶⁷² The Germans are only mentioned for their buttons (taken from prisoners) and helmets.⁶⁷³ McLaren was simply one of many “men [who] gathered from all parts of the world into the fields of Belgium and France and started throwing lead pellets at each other.”⁶⁷⁴ His aphorisms thus speak about how men fought, but more importantly they speak about the bewilderment men experienced at the bizarre realities of being forced to fight, and how men could and did speak about the war without speaking about the fighting. To volunteer to become a target is to volunteer to pose a threat to a target and to throw lead pellets back, ideally.

Music was embedded into the very core of regimental life throughout the war, and was decidedly linked to its martial exploits (this was true for most of the battalions in the CEF). Two complete military bands joined the ranks of the Patricia’s when the war broke out, and both horns and bagpipes would be played to keep up the morale of the troops (despite Rennie and Company singing *Spagoni* to cover their noise). The regimental pipe band played them over the top at every offensive battle the regiment went over the top at, except Passchendaele, where not even the most professional pipe-band could contend with the weather.⁶⁷⁵ When that task was completed, they lay down their bagpipes and drums, and took up their stretchers. Bill Miller, who spoke of Munroe as a fellow stretcher bearer, made the opposite decision that the boxer had made and chose to transfer out of the stretcher bearers to form a machine-gun squad after his brother was killed. As he remembers it, his officer’s “only

⁶⁷² McLaren, “Mirth and Mud Part I,” 14.

⁶⁷³ Canadian soldiers were famously fond of souvenirs, and took every opportunity to find, and often send home artefacts of their war experience. Cook quotes the trench newspaper of the 20th Battalion, *The Twentieth Gazette* as writing in 1916 that, “A Hun prisoner who had been captured at the Somme, in the course of conversation, remarked: ‘English fight for what he think is right. German fight for what he think is right. Canadian—he fights for souvenirs.’” Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 278. See also, Ibid., “‘Tokens of Fritz’: Canadian Soldiers and the Art of Souveneering in the Great War,” *War & Society* 31, no. 3 (2012): 211-226. Jennifer Wellington, *Exhibiting War: The Great War, Museums, and Memory in Britain, Canada, and Australia* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 17-27.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁵ According to Adamson, the PPCLI pipe band was the only one in the world that could play *La Marseillaise* on the “funny instrument.” Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 17 Feb 1917, 263.

question was, [']Miller would you rather carry a Big Drum, or a Machine Gun[?'] *My Answer*['']A Machine Gun Sir.[']"⁶⁷⁶ He was given command of a Vickers and eight days' training. He picked his crew primarily from Irish members of the regiment: "We were known as the Scotch, Irish Gun Crew, and attached to H.Q. Coy. I lost my Brother in the 10th Batt. I lost my Cousin the C.M.R.s I lost a Lot of Friends. *I Wanted Revenge*."⁶⁷⁷ Whereas Miller was motivated to volunteer to fight, as we will see, McLaren was ready and willing to fight but was perfectly content to carry on necessary war work behind the lines. Nevertheless, as a pawn temporarily employed as a jester, McLaren had no real say in the matter of when he would fight and when he would perform.

For A. Sydney Bruneau, a noted artist after the war whose war service informed his art, the voice and singing of his late friend Sergeant McLean was one of his most poignant war memories. As he wrote to Bastedo: "Our stay in the Armentières trenches ended with an informal concert as we waited for relief... and the sergeant came over to the bay in which we had gathered to contribute 'When you come to the end of a perfect day.' We discovered that he had a beautiful singing voice with an unsuspected power of sentiment."⁶⁷⁸ Seldom do we imagine the soldiers in the trenches singing a song about the perfection of the day: "For mem'ry has painted this perfect day/ With colors that never fade,/ And we find at the end of a perfect day/ The soul of a friend we've made."⁶⁷⁹ Bruneau draws a picture of life at the front that bears little resemblance to what is so often portrayed in military histories. He

⁶⁷⁶ William Miller to William Bastedo, "Remember Vimy," undated, 31(26)-9.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.,

⁶⁷⁸ A. Sydney Bruneau, "To the Unknown Soldiers II: In Memory of Sgt. Donald McLean [first page missing]," 5, 31(14)-2.

⁶⁷⁹ Carrie Jacobs-Bond, "A Perfect Day," 1910. *Songs of America* <http://www.songofamerica.net/song/perfect-day> (27 Aug 2017). See also, Carrie Jacobs-Bond (music) and J.P. McEvoy (words), "The End of a Perfect Day: Special Peace Edition," (Toronto: Carrie Jacobs Bond and Son, 1919). *Archive.org* <https://ia902301.us.archive.org/26/items/endofofperfectdays00jaco/endofofperfectdays00jaco.pdf> (27 Aug 2017). Adamson also records the song being sung by P.D. Ham at almost the same period, just before the formation of the Comedy Company. "We had a Battn. Concert last night. Buller sang Yip Hi Addie, Hi Ha. A private, son of Dr. Ham the Toronto Organist sang 'A Perfect Day'. He has a wonderful voice." Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 21 May 1916, 181.

remembers fondly a little concert that was held in a dugout, an interlude to the fighting that McLaren would have described as “the barns where the true brotherhood of man existed.”⁶⁸⁰

Bruneau also recalled a debate he had at the front with Sergeant McLean about the morality of killing and war. He begins by discussing the overall positive impact that the war had on McLean’s physique and mental acuity, finding that in the trenches he was a “picture of massive cheerfulness” and that, on one occasion while in a particularly dirty and demoralizing part of the line, “apart from his mudstained uniform he could have presented himself in a drawing-room.”⁶⁸¹ This while Bruneau’s morale was so low that he was too exhausted to shave or grab his equipment for sentry duty:

“It’s a tough war,” he said, tucking me under the unshaven chin, “but as they say it’s better than no war at all.” “I don’t suppose that’s your real opinion,” I answered, “Or do you find it is really calling out all our nobler qualities?” “It does do something of that,” said the sergeant, “some of us will be better men for it, I have no doubt.” “There are just as difficult tasks in our daily lives,” I rejoined, “and nobler ways of bettering ourselves than killing off our fellow-men” ... “*I have never thought of killing anyone*,” said the sergeant simply, “to me the nobility lies more in being killed, or at least in accepting the risk of it, in our being willing to lay down our lives so that if possible the world may be a better place when it’s all over. From any other point of view it’s a fool’s game.” [Emphasis added]⁶⁸²

That was how McLean admonished Bruneau for his appearance and attitude – tactfully, cheerfully and philosophically. McLean, like McLaren, emphasised the nobility in “volunteering to become a target,” and the killing portion of the job was merely corollary to that decision.⁶⁸³ “Better than no war at all” was, in this case, an admonishment to look one’s best despite the circumstances.

It would not be long before the men of the Comedy Company would be back to singing their songs in dugouts and trenches such as those where McLean sang “When you come to the end of a perfect day.” A year after their first concert at Steenvoorde and having played some 150 performances (a new show every thirty days), the men of the PPCLI CC were ordered back to the battalion on June

⁶⁸⁰ J.W. McLaren, “Mirth and Mud Part III,” 81.

⁶⁸¹ Bruneau, “Sergeant McLean,” 6.

⁶⁸² Ibid., 7.

⁶⁸³ McLaren, “Mirth and Mud Part I,” 14.

25th, 1917. Official concert parties were becoming more “official,” and the men of the Comedy Company had to compete with the official divisional concert party, the Dumbells, as well as myriad others which had begun to pop up. McLaren says only that they were sent back to the battalion, “owing to a slight difference of opinion between the Y.M.C.A. and ourselves.”⁶⁸⁴ Adamson, who was ultimately responsible for the decision, remarks that he returned the men to their fighting companies because, “They were getting spoilt and talked about their profession.”⁶⁸⁵

In the aftermath of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, with the positions largely having been consolidated, the battalion spent the following month in training for the upcoming Corps assault on Hill 70. The men of the PPCLI CC remained with the battalion in the line around Lens and through the next “big-push” in the Ypres Salient, fighting to wrest the ridge and village of Passchendaele from German control. The comedy troupe would not be reconstituted until after the battle in November 1917, and only three of the original members (T.J. Lilly, Fred Fenwick, and J.W. McLaren) were still with the Battalion at that time. Most served in rifle companies, although two of the nine were battalion signallers. P.D. Ham was eventually commissioned into the battalion and finished the war before his training was complete as an Officer Cadet, and Captain Pembroke was transferred into the fabled job with the Canadian Army Pay Corps at the London Pay Office. The original iteration of the PPCLI CC at Steenvoorde consisted of nine soldiers, including seven private soldiers from HQ and the fighting companies.⁶⁸⁶ There has never been a scholarly attempt to distinguish what the war service of the soldiers of the PPCLI CC entailed, and they tended to remember themselves exclusively in the vein of soldier entertainer, interspersing their reminiscences with a smattering of the real thing but focusing on

⁶⁸⁴ McLaren, “Mirth and Mud III,” 68. Wilson notes their going back to the trenches, but does not offer an explanation. Wilson, *Soldiers of Song*, 58-9.

⁶⁸⁵ Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 21 July 1917, 297. He went on to say that, “When we get out I am having a comedy show given entirely by officers and another by Sergeants, both being burlesques on the old Comedy Company.” Art imitating life, imitating art.

⁶⁸⁶ Clarke, “Property Book,” 8. Clarke lists the original members by company.

the dark jollity and fellowship. The archival evidence demonstrates that they took part in the fighting and killing by necessity and occupation. It also shows, perhaps surprisingly, that their war service tended to mirror their performance on stage.

As we have seen, throughout the war the enemy tended to remain largely off stage, but in the case of the PPCLI CC he was also played ably by T.J. Lilly in his guise as the Kaiser. The “war lord” was a staple of a PPCLI CC sketch “An Affair of Nations” which remained part of their program throughout their performances, and even set the Kaiser’s cousin himself, King George V, into stitches.⁶⁸⁷ Set in Hell, the sketch has various nefarious characters including the Quarter-Master Sergeant, the sanitary man, and the conscientious objector come tumbling down the chute. The last character to tumble into hell was Kaiser Wilhelm played by T.J. Lilly, to whom the Prince of Darkness “immediately cringed and warped into snivelling submission and abdicated his throne.”⁶⁸⁸ The humour is Scottish Protestant with a focus on the fact that those members of the audience might find themselves tumbling into the pit, and the overall message is overtly aimed at vilifying the German race and its atrocities. Moreover, although it does not make this point emphatic, the sketch also makes implicit the fact that the bells of hell would certainly go ting-a-ling-a-ling for many of the characters of the regiment before the war was over. Before Kaiser Bill was cast into the pit (which was not, as it turned out, what happened), “various disagreeable regimental personalities” (as well as perfectly agreeable ones) would also by necessity meet their untimely end.

The first two casualties taken upon the resumption of service in the line by the men of the PPCLI CC were Norman Clarke (the “property” man and set designer) and W.I. Cunningham. Clarke was wounded by shrapnel to the face near Lens on the 27th of August 1917, one of eight men wounded that

⁶⁸⁷ McLaren, *JW*, 37.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

day (and one killed).⁶⁸⁹ The day before, the scout section that Christie had helped to found was “wiped out by a single shell.”⁶⁹⁰ Christie was convalescing at the time. Clarke was in No. 1 Company, which was in the front-line around Cité St. Laurent. He suffered multiple facial wounds that caused him “great pain,” and nearly lost his left eye and his left ear, and had a hole punched in his top left molar.⁶⁹¹

Hodder-Williams describes the period that Clarke was wounded at Lens as “by far their most trying week between the Battles of Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele.”⁶⁹² Left out of the main assault in the “reserve” part of the front-line, the Battle of Hill 70/Lens was, for the Patricia’s, mostly a gunners’ affair. They occupied blocking positions around Cité St. Pierre and Fosse II, on the Corps’ right flank, and were not part of the attack itself, supporting only a “dummy attack.”⁶⁹³ Likely, a few of the men of the Patricia’s felt like dummies as they had to grin and bear it for almost a week as shells burst everywhere around their positions.⁶⁹⁴

William Innes Cunningham also succumbed to the shellfire at Lens, and became the PPCLI CC’s second casualty after its return to front-line duty. In what proves a common theme of the war service of a rifleman of the PPCLI CC, Cunningham’s service in the battalion reflected the role that he had played on stage. In this case Bill was known for playing Charlie Chaplin to great success before the creation of, as well as on stage with, the Comedy Company.⁶⁹⁵ The first, most famous movie star of this period,

⁶⁸⁹ Norman Clarke (487301), “Casualty Form,” Service Record, RG150, box 1757, file 14, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=104006> (15 Aug 2017). “PPCLI War Diaries,” 27 Aug 1917.

⁶⁹⁰ Clarke, Service Record, 26 Aug 1917.

⁶⁹¹ Cocaine was used as an analgesic and carbolic glycerine as an anti-septic. Ibid.

⁶⁹² Hodder-Williams, *PPCLI*, 2 vols., 1:239.

⁶⁹³ Ibid., 241-241

⁶⁹⁴ See for example, Robert T. Foley, “The Other Side of the Hill: The German Defence,” *Capturing Hill 70: Canada’s Forgotten Battle of the First World War*, ed., Douglas E. Delaney and Serge Marc Durflinger (Toronto: UBC Press, 2016), 188-189.

⁶⁹⁵ “Chas. Chaplin at the Front: Famous Movies Actor in Princess Pats’ Concert,” *McGill Daily*, undated (1916), 39(2)-9. See also picture of the original Comedy Company cast in uniform with Cunningham as Charlie Chaplin, reprinted in, Zubkowski, *Faith and Freedom*, 169. Horrall points out how ubiquitous Chaplin performances and culture were within the CEF during the war. A significant battle was waged over the Chaplin moustache, for example. Before it became the Hitler moustache, it seemed that everyone in the CEF wanted to have one and strict

Chaplin was a master of physical pantomime, slap-stick, and silent comedy.⁶⁹⁶ The humour was all in the movement, especially during Chaplin's keystone days and the origin of the little tramp. Here's the puny Chaplin having a drink on the way to his job as a piano mover, here he is bouncing around and making life hilariously difficult for his burly partner.⁶⁹⁷ Here is W.I. Cunningham shaking like a leaf and crying "almost continually," the result of two shells bursting close by his position, which is less funny.⁶⁹⁸ Here is Cunningham, like Chaplin, with greatly exaggerated startle reflexes.⁶⁹⁹ This is not to suggest that Cunningham was actively malingering, but rather that his mind snapped back into a familiar caricature when the stress and strain of battle became too much for him. However, Captain H.E. Sullivan, Cunningham's company officer, did believe that he had not stood the challenge as well as others, "I certify that the above named (5) *was not* subjected in the course of his duty to exceptional exposure (6) of the following nature. The shelling was fairly heavy at the time, but not exceptional. No shells burst very close to Pte Cunningham, and other men who had a much more trying time than he were not affected."⁷⁰⁰ The author of this indictment against Cunningham, which ultimately had no effect on his treatment, was killed at Passchendaele. The war had made Cunningham's portrayal of Chaplin

orders were issued that it was all moustache or no moustache with no wiggle room. As one soldier's rhyme had it, "So bid farewell to dear old 'Charlie,' / Soldiers both in France and Blight, / Lest they should take you out at dawn / And shoot you in your 'nighty.'" Later Horrall points out, "In October [1917] the *Sling*, the magazine of the Canadian Field Ambulance, published a spoof note from Charlie that read: 'I wish I was there boys, but I hear they have Chaplains enough for the present.'" Andrew Horrall, "Charlie Chaplin and the Canadian Expeditionary Force," in *Canada and the Great War: Western Front Association Papers*, ed. Briton Busch (Montreal: MQUP, 2003), 36-7, 38.

⁶⁹⁶ As Horrall points out, "In the press it was said, with some justification, that this so-called "million-dollar contract" guaranteed Chaplin the greatest salary ever earned by anyone, anywhere, in any walk of life." Ibid., 31.

⁶⁹⁷ "Looking for Work," 7 Nov 1914, Keystone Studios, 7:47-8:30. *His Musical Career (1914) – Charlie Chaplin - Mack Sennett* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FWaT_dmfXo (15 Aug 2017). See also, Charles Chaplin, *My Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 140-61.

⁶⁹⁸ William Innis Cunningham (410920), "Medical Case Sheet," 19-22 Oct 1917, Service Record, RG150, box 2222, file 22, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=129887> (15 Aug 2017).

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., "Army Form W3464: Report to be rendered in the case of Officers and other ranks who, without any visible wound, become non-effective from physical conditions claimed or presumed to have originated from the effects of British or enemy weapons in action," 20 Sept 1917. On battle exhaustion see, Gabriel, Richard A., *No More Heroes: Madness and Psychiatry in War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), 45-70.

debilitatingly persistent (although not chronic, Cunningham recovered sufficiently to be discharged in a convalescent hospital that focused on retooling his mind away from the war).

Like McLaren, Cunningham's focus throughout his correspondence was on his role as entertainer vice soldier. He says almost literally nothing about the war in his correspondence with Bastedo but to note that it "is Hell," and his job was to fill the "moments when the soldiers did get a chance to relax, and... provide the humour for the day."⁷⁰¹ It was the part of his war service that he most wanted remembered. Part of Cunningham's convalescent treatment involved drawing, an occupation with which he had considerable experience, having been a trained draughtsman in civilian life. Some of the sketches survive, and one depicts a wounded Canadian soldier wearing hospital blues and sporting a captured *pickelhaube*.⁷⁰² Cunningham arrived in France in July 1915, so served almost a full year with the battalion before joining the original PPCLI CC. He may not have killed anyone, and certainly he did not have an opportunity to at Lens. But he presents as a man trying desperately to put those parts of the war behind him and speak of more pleasant things.

The Comedy Company's public reminiscences of the war tended to be edited into a publicly palatable schema that was circumspect about the more difficult aspects of the war, especially killing. Take for example McLaren's description of Passchendaele (the only one that this author could find for any of the Comedy Company members).

From the Vimy Ridge Sector the Canadian Corps was moved once again, and for the last time, to the Ypres Salient. During the fighting on the Meetcheele Ridge in the Battle of Passchendaele on October 30, Stanley Morrison went down the line. He lost a leg and died from his wound a few years later in Montreal. P.D. Ham went down the line to take a special course... After our somewhat harrowing experiences of Lens and Passchendaele the new Comedy Company set about the old job of entertainment with renewed vigour.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰¹ W.I. Cunningham to W.E. Bastedo, 6 Jan 1964, 31(14)-3.

⁷⁰² Ibid., W.I. Cunningham sketch, Basingstoke, 1918.

⁷⁰³ McLaren, "Mirth and Mud Part III," 76.

Their renewed vigour was obvious, and they were so successful behind the lines that they were granted a command performance in London for the King. When the landscape artist A.Y. Jackson, taken on the strength of the Canadian War Records Office, was asked why he produced so much more work than his fellow artists he responded that “if the others had been in the ranks for two years they would know when they had a ‘cushy’ job.”⁷⁰⁴ McLaren knew a cushy job when he saw one, and put his heart and soul into the work of the Comedy Company after it was reformed during the quiet period of the winter of 1918, content to remember that portion of his war to the exclusion of Passchendaele.

Not every member of the original iteration of the Comedy Company returned to the stage in late 1917. Percy Dillon Ham remained with the regiment and proved the archetype of a determined professional soldier that the PPCLI took such pride in producing, and – of course – he had played the same character on stage. Corporal Ham won the Croix de Guerre for service at the Battle of Amiens in 1918, and was eventually commissioned from the ranks. Three years earlier, Private Ham (475871) had made it to the front in October 1915. His father was Dr. Albert Ham, “a choir conductor, teacher, composer, textbook author, organist” who had a Doctorate in music and likely taught Percy a thing or two about stagecraft and performing.⁷⁰⁵ In the “Affair of Nations” skit, he was given the role of John Bull, one in which he appeared as a dapper gentleman with a gigantic Union Jack codpiece, drawing focus to the genteel virility of the friendly side.⁷⁰⁶ He thus presented the archetype of what soldiers thought of their own nation and themselves as soldiers. He was demonstrably a killer, as his *Croix de Guerre* citation makes clear: “*Dans la nuit du 12 au 13 août 1918, ont attaqué audacieusement les positions ennemies sur 700 metres, mis hors d’usage 16 mitrailleuses, tué de nombreux allemands et*

⁷⁰⁴ A.Y. Jackson, “Reminiscences of Army Life, 1914-1918,” *Canadian Art* XI:1 (Autumn 1953), 9.

⁷⁰⁵ “Albert Ham,” The Canadian Encyclopedia. *Historica Canada*
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/albert-ham-emc/> (15 Aug 2017).

⁷⁰⁶ “Programme 3rd Revue. Finale ‘An Affair of Nations,’” 39(2)-1. See also picture printed in McLaren, *JW*, 22.

ramené 11 prisonniers."⁷⁰⁷ The action that Ham took part in on the 12th of August was the continuation of the Battle of Amiens which had begun on the 8th, referred to as the "black day of the German Army." Amiens, is described by a contemporary, Major J.P. Fitzgerald, as the "great pearl in Canada's diadem of war glory."⁷⁰⁸ The assault on the 12th saw the 7th Brigade move through the captured enemy positions and assault in the direction of Parvillers. It was here that Ham displayed his abilities as a front-line killer during a successful bombing raid that commenced at 8:00pm.

During these operations the Company inflicted very heavy casualties on the Germans; at least thirty dead were counted in the trenches as a result of the bombing attacks. Twenty six German machine Guns were captured and dismantled. Had it not been for a shortage in the supply of bombs, Captain MacBrayne's party would undoubtedly have made a further advance, but they had exhausted all their supply of bombs, including a number that they had borrowed from other Companies before the attack. They used in addition a considerable number of enemy Stick Bombs, which they gathered from his trenches, until these also were exhausted.⁷⁰⁹

According to Ham's *Croix de Guerre* citation, he, and Privates Garscadden and Penton, were instrumental in capturing or destroying sixteen of the twenty-six machine guns that the raid silenced. Ham, who had played John Bull in the "affair of nations" skit, now played John Bull in the big fight. Evidently, Ham's later days after the war were not so happy or successful; as W.I. Cunningham has it he became a "problem boy after his discharge."⁷¹⁰ Ham had stood witness to McLaren's marriage in 1923, but little else can be determined about his life; he left no correspondence to determine exactly what Cunningham was referring to.⁷¹¹ He never joined the Dumbells for their performances following the war.

⁷⁰⁷ "Extrait de L'Ordre Du 5^o Groupe, N^o 39, Le Lieutenant-Colonel Meulle-Desjardins, Commandant le 5^{ème} Groupe de Chasseurs, Corporal Percy Dillon Ham *Croix de Guerre* 1914-1918 avec étoile de bronze," 5 Sept 1918, *Centres des Archives du Personnel Militaire*, Paris.

⁷⁰⁸ Major J.P. Fitzgerald MC, "Battle of Amiens Great Pearl in Canada's Diadem of War Glory." (unknown date, publication or page number, [1918]), newspaper clippings Battle of Amiens, 38(3)-2.

⁷⁰⁹ "War Diaries 1914-19," August 1918, Appendix 1.

⁷¹⁰ Cunningham to Bastedo, Aug 4th 1964, 31(14)-3.

⁷¹¹ "Marriage registry, John Wilson McLaren, 27, actuary, Scotland... married Lillian Clark McGregor... with: Percy Dillon HAM... & Marion Augusta WHITE of Lindsay," July 10, 1923, "1923 marriages from MS 932 Victoria, Co. 1923." *Rootsweb*, <http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~maryc/vic1923.htm> (16 Aug 2017).

Stanley Morrison was likely dead before the Battle of Amiens began. He was a good-looking chap, squat and handsome, and it is not hard to imagine him eliciting a whistle or two of appreciation when he dressed in Patricia's gowns and performed with the PPCLI CC. A picture of him, wounded and grinning from ear to ear over the blighty that he had literally in hand, was taken in the summer of 1917.⁷¹² In it, we see the meticulousness with which Morrison's kit was arranged and packed. He was, at that point, a lance-corporal and was back with the regiment in time for Passchendaele, where he lost his leg. The leg that had been tastefully showed off to his brother soldiers in many a skit behind the lines. He was shot by a machine-gun bullet in the knee shortly after going over the top, and he underwent two amputation surgeries, one at the front and one later in England.⁷¹³

Lilly's service record indicates that the worst that he suffered during the war was Myalgia (deep and debilitating muscle pain), Scabies (a skin infestation caused by mites), Pyrexia of Unknown Origin ("P.U.O.", a high and unexplained fever), Bronchitis, and Influenza. Certainly, he did not have an entirely pleasant war, but he did have one gloriously free from physical penetration by enemy projectiles. Lilly appears to have been present at both Lens and Passchendaele, returning from treatment of Myalgia from the 8th Canadian Field Ambulance on the 30th of October, the day before the PPCLI went over the top. His scabies was treated by the same unit shortly after the PPCLI CC was reconstituted. Of his war service little is known. One fellow Patricia, Francis James Whiting mentioned him in his diary:

I was so dazed by the shell that had burst in front of me when getting out the wounded man that I was as dizzy as if I was drunk. However, [W. G.] Elder and I managed to stagger down to the dugouts under the ramparts. *There Tom Lilly got us some tea and a good snort of rum*, and

⁷¹² Undated photograph, 31()-22)-9.

⁷¹³ McLaren, "Mirth and Mud Part III," 76. According to McLaren he died shortly thereafter, and although his service record does not mention a date of death (his having been pensioned and released from the military before he died), it does note that in 1920 his medals were sent to his widow Mrs. Margaret Morrison. Stanley Morrison (McG 110), "H.Q. 649-M-25288," Service Record, RG150, box 6414, file 21, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=177990> (16 Aug 2017).

found me a dry place to curl up in, as I had had no sleep for nearly three days. [Emphasis added]⁷¹⁴

Lilly was considerably older than McLaren, and he left no public reminiscences. He enjoyed being the wild-card of the group and certainly partook of a drink as heartily as a man can enjoy one (or two... or more). Here, the truer war stories were likely told, but very little survives of their telling.

Fred Fenwick, the outstanding female impersonator of the PPCLI CC who had burst onto the stage in a gown donated by Princess Patricia herself and, together with the rest of the beauty chorus, turned the tide of the “battle” of Steenvoorde (to the strains of Spagoni it will be remembered), was also present at Passchendaele. Unlike other members of the PPCLI CC, Fenwick appears to have lived a charmed life. There is not a single notation of his missing time in the line of battle in his service record.⁷¹⁵ With the exception of a ten-day period of leave that extended over the terrible week in Lens, Fenwick did not leave the line throughout the months that the PPCLI CC was at the front. He was at Passchendaele, where the Pats, “inconceivably,” advanced in “a sea of slimy mud.”⁷¹⁶

Jack McLaren was at Passchendaele as well, and he appears to have “stuck it” with the best of them. McLaren’s service record reads like Fenwick’s: nothing jumps out immediately. His casualty form, the best source we have to track an individual’s movements through the war, like Fred Fenwick’s, is short.⁷¹⁷ We know that he was part of No. 2 Company (7 Platoon), the same company as Bruneau, amongst others. At Passchendaele, No. 2 Company was at the right front of the attack, advancing behind the almost comically slow barrage that moved at a pace of 750 yards (685m) an hour; 100 yards every

⁷¹⁴ Francis James Whiting, “The War Diaries of Francis James Whiting, Diary 3,” 4 Jun 1916, <http://ssns.frontiersd.mb.ca/SeniorYrs/Curricula9-12/Grade11/CanadianHistory/RemembranceDay/Soldiers/Whiting/Diaries/WhitingDiary3.pdf> (16 Aug 2017).

⁷¹⁵ Fred Fenwick (475434), Service Record, RG150, box 3038, file 6, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=385644> (13 Aug 2017)

⁷¹⁶ G.T. Hancox to W.E. Bastedo, undated, 31(22)-6.

⁷¹⁷ John Wilson McLaren (475329), Service Record, RG150, box 7017, file 32, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=166816> (22 Aug 2017).

eight minutes. Adamson, then in command of the regiment, judged it “about right... for the heavy going over ground that beggared description.”⁷¹⁸ This last company moved from Gravenstafel Ridge (right beside the battlefield at Frezenburg in 1915) to the jumping off trenches in advance of the support companies and remained there in reserve after the show began. The relief of the other three companies that took place at 11:05 PM was observed and fired upon by the enemy. McLaren’s company, No. 2, took one man killed during the relief. The battle itself kicked off at 5:50 AM, and after about five hours of unimaginable fighting, the high ground of Meetcheele ridge, the battalion objective, was secured. In the war diary, the fog of uncertainty is almost impenetrable. Mullin, Christie, and Lieutenant McKenzie appear as outstanding figures, the former capturing the strongest German position while covered by the sniper fire of Christie and a diversionary frontal assault led by McKenzie. One hundred filled magazines of Lewis Gun ammunition were urgently requested at 1:45 PM; the assaulting companies, having consolidated their positions atop the ridge line, were engaged in dispersing the inevitable German counterattack. The men of fortress Germany poured fire onto the ridges, killing many, and the men of the Patricia’s before during and after consolidation poured fire right back.⁷¹⁹ Only 250 men remained fighting by the time that consolidation took place. Perhaps McLaren and Fenwick carried ammunition, perhaps they fired Lewis Guns or rifles, or threw bombs, perhaps they did their best to stay invisible or became “all in” and were evacuated from the front, perhaps all the above.

Passchendaele was a telling gap in McLaren’s war memoir and common amongst survivors of the battle. Passchendaele was not something that got discussed much: too many wounded men getting sucked into the earth around you to feel capable of enunciating. After the day’s fighting ended, the Germans emerged under a white flag to retrieve their wounded. The scene is narrated by Captain H.E.

⁷¹⁸ Hodder-Williams, *PPCLI*, 2 vols., 1:257.

⁷¹⁹ For more on the concept of fortress Germany from the German perspective, especially as it relates to the mindset of being under a state of siege, and the key imperative of the infantry to “*Durchhalten*,” the German equivalent of “stick it” see, Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914*, 135-55.

Sullivan (the officer that decried the legitimacy of Cunningham's wound), who was killed a scant fifteen minutes after sending this message to Battalion HQ,

I find our line consisting of shell holes running about level with pill-box. Well held in small separate posts. Capt. Wood of the R.C.R. brought up his Coy. of 30 Other Ranks and has dug in 50 yards behind Pill-Box. There are only 8 R.C.R. left in the front-line with 2 Officers. We have 6 Lewis Guns in working order and hold the crest of the ridge. The enemy have apparently dug themselves in 200 yards in front of us. One of their patrols has just come up to our line but was beaten off. I figure I can hold this line against any counter-attack they put across. The sniping from our left is the worst feature. I am sending out Lieut Macartney who is all in and has been slightly hit in the wrist. Capt. Macpherson is pretty well all in. Lieut Puley has done very well and was in charge of the front-line when I took over. We have about 15 stretcher cases in this Pill-Box as well as others outside. The enemy were using white flags today with their stretcher parties. I suggest that you send up stretcher parties by daylight to-morrow with white flags. *We want water, S.O.S. Signals, S.A.A. and Bombs. Also a few rounds of blank.* [Emphasis added]⁷²⁰

As Samuel Coleridge wrote of the ancient mariner, "Water, water everywhere/ nor any drop to drink."

The next priority was ammunition, indicating that the men's chief priority, after getting a drink of potable water, was killing as many Germans as possible in order to maintain their positions. The blank rounds were used for rifle grenades.

McLaren's terse statement about the PPCLI CC's "harrowing" experiences fits into the vein of many of the survivors' testimonies, or rather lack thereof. Bercuson quotes the Swiss-Canadian artist and University Company soldier André Bieler on the inescapable desperate horror of the place and the time,

Passchendaele... just the name and the spelling of that place is revolting... The frozen, stinking mud on both sides of the boardwalk. If a horse got off the board walk, he would sink into that mud and struggle would only make him go deeper until he was shot. We were so loaded with wire and tools that if a man fell, it was the most difficult thing to get him out... hell is warm, hell is flames... frozen to death in the dark was Passchendaele.⁷²¹

But, for Bieler (as for McLaren and so many other soldiers here studied), the war was not all bad. Just over a year earlier, while convalescing from bronchitis at the No. 4 Convalescent Depot, Bieler had been

⁷²⁰ H.E. Sullivan, "Message No. 11," "War Diaries 1914-19," Appendix B, 1:30 AM 31 October 1917.

⁷²¹ Bieler quoted in, Bercuson, *The Patricias*, 106. See also, Frances K. Smith, *André Biéler: An Artist's Life and Times* (Laval: Firefly Books, 2006), 35.

“Deprived of one day[']s pay *for pillow fighting in his hut*. [Emphasis added]”⁷²² The true brotherhood of man is what allowed men to move forward through hell. To kill during the war was to want to “stick it” against unimaginable odds, out of love for one’s fellows and a desire to avenge their loss.

We know that most of the men of the PPCLI CC were at Passchendaele, and that men like McLaren, Fred Fenwick, and T.J. Lilly, who made an occupation of mirth, suffered through ninety-five hours of continuous fighting. The battalion had absorbed losses even before they got to their jumping-off trenches. By the time they reached their objectives atop Meetcheele ridge, they began to deal out death against the counterattacking Germans, burning through Lewis gun ammunition in particularly high quantities. Men seldom spoke of it, however, certainly none of those present who had been in the Comedy Company. In the case of Passchendaele, when they did speak about it, they tended to focus on the horrors inflicted upon their own side instead of the horrors they inflicted upon others. But they did inflict casualties, to such good effect that the Germans went out to gather their wounded under the cover of a white flag, an extremely uncommon occurrence.⁷²³

The onset of peace and the signing of the Armistice found the Third Canadian Division and the men of the PPCLI in Mons, where the war had begun for the British Expeditionary Force, capping the success of the final offensive against “Ludendorf [sic] and his Lachrymose Lackies” that began at Amiens.⁷²⁴ There was increasingly little doubt that the Germans were capable of halting the advance of the three Allied armies progressing against them. The fighting had started with the partial breakout from Amiens and Parvillers, where P.D. Ham won his Croix de Guerre for bombing down 700m of enemy trench, killing and capturing men and machine-guns. Amazingly, the bloodiest battles of the war were

⁷²² André Charles Bieler (410962), “Casualty Form,” 26 Sept 1916, Service Record, RG150, box 720, file 27, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=43039> (15 Aug 2017).

⁷²³ Sullivan, “Message No. 11,” “PPCLI War Diaries.”

⁷²⁴ McLaren, “Mirth and Mud Part III,” 81.

still to come⁷²⁵ as the fight begun at Amiens was carried on to clear a line of villages and towns between Amiens and Mons. Over the hundred days following Amiens, the Corps and the battalion fought through heavily defended crossings at the Drocourt-Quéant Line, the Canal du Nord, Cambrai, Valenciennes, their progress a straight line towards Mons. On 11 November, the Canadians had fought their way into the town and the locals had seen the yoke of four years of occupation thrown off at one fell swoop.

The first troops to fight into Mons were members of the Third Canadian Division, with the PPCLI in the van. The salient features of the ensuing proclamation are as follows.

Proclamation À la Population de Mons: After 51 months of suffering caused by the iniquitous, pitiless, insolent occupation of the German Army, the town of Mons is at last delivered by the heroism of the British and Canadian Armies [sic]... The 3rd Canadian Division at the price of heavy [lourds] sacrifices entered the town at 3:00 in the morning, avenging thus by a glorious [éclatant] success the retreat of 1914. *Glory and Honour* [Reconnaissance] *to Them!*⁷²⁶

If the Canadian Corps, the Third Division, the 7th Brigade and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry could be expected to put on a show of the size of the seizure of Mons and the continuation of the harrying of the German retreat at such short notice, their jesters were expected to be able to do the same.

McLaren emphasizes in his memoirs that the PPCLI CC and the Dumbells (the troupe for which he is principally remembered) did not combine until shortly before the Armistice. They had had a number of weeks to rehearse a show in a village shortly behind the lines enduring a period of idleness where they could not perform due to the speed of the advance. (McLaren gives it as Fr[é]vent, a village

⁷²⁵ The fighting around Tilloy and Cambrai, especially, stand out as examples of the terrible slaughter wrought on the Patricia's by the entrenched German positions behind rows of barbed wire that were overgrown with vegetation and were invisible to aerial observers. McCullough argues that things got so bad that there was almost a commanders' mutiny. The salient exchange is between Brigadier-General Clark and the senior surviving company commander G.W. Little (after Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart was killed): "He said 'Okay, Little, you're doing to do it again... I said, 'I don't think we have enough men to do it.' 'If you haven't, Little, then you have a lot of stragglers.' Well, I hope you can see that saying that to a fellow who was in the PPCLI as I, was exactly like calling a fellow the worst name you can think of in front of his mother. That infuriated me beyond any sensibility." But – of course – having experienced the high level betrayal of *thémis*, Little did not back down from the challenge. "To hell with him. We'll show the bugger that we can still do it even though he killed half of the 42nd... we're not going to do it the way its been done so far." McCulloch, "Crisis in Leadership," 393-4.

⁷²⁶ Original copy kept by McLaren, 39(2)-1. See also, 35(7)-1.

150 kilometers from the line, east of Arras, but it could also have been Fresnes, just east of Mons and close to the Third Division, to which the Dumbells also belonged: it seems more likely that they both converged on the Third Division area as they had done throughout the war).

Given the context of the armistice, the Dumbells and McLaren chose to perform Gilbert and Sullivan's musical, *the HMS Pinafore*, because of its themes focused on the fighting prowess of the men who had just won the war, and struck the multiple thousands of "blows" that it took such that the Germans could no longer carry on the fight: "A British tar is a soaring soul, / As free as a mountain bird, / *His energetic fist should be ready to resist / A dictatorial word.* / His nose should pant and his lip should curl, / His cheeks should flame and his brow should furl, / His bosom should heave and his heart should glow, / *And his fist be ever ready for a knock-down blow.* [Emphasis added]."⁷²⁷ It reminds one of Cunningham's portrait of the cute little chap in hospital blues sporting a *Pickelhaube*: the conquering hero fresh from the line, not a murderous killing monster (as the Germans are so consistently portrayed) but an innocuous cherub smiling at his honourable wound, and showing off the most coveted souvenir of the front-line infantry. The operetta is about fighting men and the women they love, and how – ultimately – they are worthy of any woman's love despite the difference in social status. (Despite the captain's belief that, "For my excellent crew, / Though foes they could thump any, / Are scarcely fit company, / My daughter, for you."⁷²⁸)

The choice of *Pinafore* can thus be seen as a reaffirmation of the nationalism and martial pride that underlay many of the numbers of the PPCLI CC (and Dumbells) such as "An Affair of Nations." The comic operetta sang of English martial pride (and by extension that of the British Empire and Canada), a pride that was equally satirized and celebrated. It was the perfect fit for the front-line soldier there for

⁷²⁷ Arthur Sullivan and William Schwenck Gilbert, "H.M.S. Pinafore: Or, The Lass that Loved a Sailor (London: Bacon & Company, Book and job printers, 1879), 18.

⁷²⁸ Ibid., 26. If Adamson is correct in saying that McLaren sought Mavor's daughter's hand but was rebuffed by Mrs. Mavor, then the line takes on a personal salience for him.

the knock-out blow: “He is an Englishman! / For he himself has said it, / And it’s greatly to his credit, / That he is an Englishman! / (ALL.) That he is an Englishman! / (BOAT.) For he might have been a Roosian, / A French, or Turk, or Proosian, / Or perhaps Itali-an! / (ALL.) Or perhaps Itali-an! / (BOAT.) But in spite of all temptations / To belong to other nations, / He remains an Englishman!”⁷²⁹ The pride that *Pinafore* presents to the soldiers who watched it was wholly exclusive, and based on having been present at the front for the knock-down blow. In the same way that Papineau wrote that he was one of only four “real men” (adduced by their uniforms) to attend a drunken party given on the Isle of Wight or the conscientious objector was cast into hell in the Comedy Company’s command performance in London, *Pinafore* reinforces and satirizes the pride that these men felt in having been *there* for the knock down blow. The pride that they sang of in *Pinafore* was the pride of the freedom to love and hate that only the army offered; *Pinafore* also speaks to the myriad constraints on every aspect of one’s life (and death) by those in command.

When the newest iteration of a lately old regiment had fought its way into Mons, clearing the path for the Dumbells to perform *Pinafore*, the advance had been carried out by men who had not stayed away from the fight. The overwhelming majority had been volunteers to join a famous regiment. Like D.J. Pearce, who had fought with the regiment during the Hundred Days after he had volunteered while training with the Signals Corps, “The Col. Of the Signals at... Ottawa, put us all around a tan bark riding oblong with a 4-ft. fence in the front of us. The Col. said all whom wishes to volunteer for the Princess Pats jump over the fence. I was the fourth one over. Although there were 250 of us. This was in September 1917, we were sent overseas two weeks later.”⁷³⁰ None of the men that we have up to now focused on, Papineau, Christie, Munroe, Draycot, or McLaren, were actually present (in a

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ D.J. Peace quoted in Zubkowski, *Faith and Freedom*, 287-8.

combatant capacity) at Mons, but the final victory had been made possible, in part, by their efforts, sacrifices and ethos.

At the front, what they had had to learn about was how to efficiently kill enemy combatants while maximizing their own safety and that of their comrades. As we have seen, McLaren was a killer while under Christie's tutelage, but other skills led him to related and useful war work behind the lines. That he did not hesitate to transfer away from the firing line is not surprising, but he had returned to the front-line in summer and fall 1917 to take up the work he had originally signed up to do (throwing "lead pellets" and various types of explosives towards the Germans). That he sought to dwell on the humour after the war simply allowed him to craft the perfect anecdote in his appearing before royalty "*en dishabille*."⁷³¹ He might just as likely have found himself standing *en dishabille* before an enemy machine gun at Passchendaele or any of the skirmishes during his months back with the regiment. Indeed, he fully expected to be performing for the Germans vice the King of England in 1918 when he found out that he was to give a Royal Command Performance.⁷³² P.D. Ham's example at Parvillers demonstrates that the men of the Comedy Company were as likely, and perhaps as skilled, acting as the killing agents of the regiment instead of acting on a stage behind the lines.

These men spoke a language of inside jokes, and – as we have seen – the killing of the enemy informed many of those jokes. Although killing enemy soldiers was not a fit or humorous subject to directly address, songs such as *Spagoni*, *The Photo of the Girl I Left Behind*, and *Dirty Work* address the motivations of men for taking life. They were happy to sing merrily of the *why* men killed, but shrouded their references between the lines of their performances. The way that killing was presented in the performances was also the way that McLaren tended to present the war in his reminiscences. The destruction of the enemy largely existed in the narrative gaps as it was not something he wished to

⁷³¹ McLaren, "Mirth and Mud Part III," 78.

⁷³² McLaren makes this point in most of his printed reminiscences of the war. For example, *Ibid*.

characterize his service or his later life. Nevertheless, killing as an idea was often directly addressed, comedically. Unfortunately, no interviewer ever pressed him on his service at Passchendaele, happy to segue to his hilarious description of the Royal Command Performance.

Chapter 8: Victor Gianelli – Princess Patricia’s Statuette of a Patricia

Since Victor Gianelli was fourteen there had been a war on. Gianelli’s world as a boy had been that of a well-to-do Italian-Canadian family (his grandfather had been Canada’s first Italian Consul-General, appointed by Queen Victoria in 1871), growing up in West Toronto (what Neville Thompson and many others, especially if they lived there, called “Toronto the Good”) near High Park.⁷³³ His father Louis and mother Janet had two children, Victor and his sister Alice who wrote him regularly at war. Alice was an “invalid” whom Victor cared for throughout his life. A keen consumer of shows of every variety, but especially the movies, Gianelli loved a performance. He even had an anecdote published in the film magazine *Photoplay’s* “Seen and Heard at the Movies” section. In June, 1915, the sixteen-year-old V.F. Gianelli had taken in a “thrilling sea picture” where the man at the wheel “swiftly began to spin the spokes over.” Vic overheard a small boy in company with his father ask, “Dad... will the boat go faster when the man gets it wound up?”⁷³⁴ Upon publication, he was paid the handsome wage of \$1.00, a day’s pay for the private soldier. Less than two years later and Gianelli was embarking on a great adventure of his own, crossing the Atlantic aboard the, *S.S. Carpathia*: taking the King’s pay of \$1.10 a day (the extra dime for overseas service) *en route* to his billet with the Canadian Army Service Corps.⁷³⁵

Gianelli, having been thoroughly acculturated to thinking about the war while a boy in Toronto, would soon find himself living the real-life “shows” of the regiment in France. He enlisted five days before his seventeenth birthday (lying about his age, he was caught out in England and sent to the PPCLI

⁷³³ Thompson, describing the boyhood of Beverly Baxter, could equally have been describing Gianelli’s. “In the beginning was Toronto: late Victorian Toronto, British imperial Toronto, Toronto the Good.” Neville Thompson, *Canada and the End of the Imperial Dream: Beverly Baxter’s Reports from London through War and Peace, 1936-1960* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2013), 13. On Toronto in the war see, Ian Hugh Maclean Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

⁷³⁴ “Seen and Heard at the Movies,” *Photoplay*, Sept 1915, 121. *Archive.org*
<https://archive.org/details/PhotoplayMagazineSept.1915> (16 Aug 2018).

⁷³⁵ Gianelli, Victor Francis (513728), “Casualty Form,” 22 April 1917, Service Record, RG150, box 3486, file 40, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=419058> (29 Aug 2017). After passing through Rimouski and “poking fun at the citizens by quoting funny little French phrases,” he had arrived at “the first tide beach I had ever seen.” Gianelli to family, Apr 6 1917, 31(18.1-18.16)-5.

nevertheless while still 17).⁷³⁶ The same *Photoplay* in which Gianelli published his anecdote lists thirty-two “War Films” that the magazine describes as “Inevitable,” meaning that they had become a staple of the movie-house all over North America.⁷³⁷ When Gianelli published his anecdote, such titles as “The Iron Cross,” “Hellfire from Heaven,” “Hate!,” “Deleted by the Censor,” “Strict Accountability,” and “The Fog of Death” were playing.⁷³⁸ The young man had thus long been aware of some far-away peril and adventure named War, and some fearsome enemy named Germany. While training to go to war with the 7th Reserve Battalion, Gianelli marvelled that the kit that he was being issued while throwing grenades was the same as that worn in the movie reels he had seen throughout the war. By May 30th he had begun training for infantryman’s duties in earnest: “Commenced the first day of the week with Bayonet Fighting and Bombing. And real bombs too – the regular whizz bangs they use in France. When bombing with live grenades we always wear steel helmets. They are the same kind of helmet which you see in the movies.”⁷³⁹ This last sentence is telling, as it speaks to how Gianelli visualized and fantasized soldiering and warfare prior to enlisting, and during training: it was not real until he had been issued the kit he saw in the movies.

At the front *Photoplay* was amongst the publications his family sent to him, and he saw as many shows as he could behind the lines. The great glossy pictures of stars dressed to the nines, the ideal of fashion and bearing that Gianelli sought to emulate, remained enjoyable reading to the battle-tested Patricia rifleman. At the front, Victor Gianelli was an ardent consumer of officially provided entertainments such as those McLaren and his troupe provided, and he understood their importance to the fighting man. As he wrote to his family, “I do not know what we would do without the little

⁷³⁶ Gianelli SR. Victor Francis Gianelli was born on 22 January, 1899 in York, Ontario. *Ancestry.ca* <https://www.ancestry.ca/genealogy/births/history/victor-gianelli.html> (26 Aug 2017).

⁷³⁷ As Hynes has written, “it was the motion picture that made the war imaginable for the people at home.” Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (New York: Random House, (1990) 2011), kindle edition, chapter 6, loc. 2527.

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁷³⁹ Gianelli to family, 30 May 1917, 1.

amusements we have out on rest.”⁷⁴⁰ They managed to lighten the mood somehow, and made the audience laugh at the injustice, horror, and violence. In short, they allowed their audience the catharsis they needed to rest and come back to themselves. It was funny because, as they learned, the war was not all that bad a lot of the time: “The report you sent about our being in a death struggle with Fritz [during the Michael Offensives] was very funny indeed and caused great amusement as we have had a quiet time indeed.”⁷⁴¹ When the British were reeling under the weight of Germany’s last great offensive and Haig famously promulgated his “backs to the wall” order of the day demanding that every soldier “fight on to the end,” the Canadians were in a decidedly “quiet” sector, although stretched to the maximum to defend that sector.⁷⁴² Victor Gianelli’s ability to remain firmly rooted in the moment, appreciating a relatively calm spring at war and losing himself in the myriad “amusements” that were readily available (although abstaining from tobacco, alcohol, and women – so chiefly food and shows) in a tactically quiet part of the line, was key to his success and durability as a killer on the Western Front. So too was the idea of the fighting that he presented honestly and in earnest while choosing to remain silent about the killing specifics.

Gianelli fought through ten consecutive months with hardly a scratch and only brief spells away from the battalion for leave. He had been with his company for every major show that the battalion, brigade and Corps had put on for the Germans during that bloody period. He had witnessed the great transition from defensive and incidental fighting to the opening and progression of the offensive that saw the enemy defeated, fighting that proved to be the costliest in terms of casualties sustained by the

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., 14 Feb 18, 5-6.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., 28 Apr 1918, 2.

⁷⁴² After laying out the titanic struggle that went on as Germany made its last concerted attempt to win the war in the west, Nicholson points out that the Canadian Corps either held the line between Lens and Vimy, a line which they had done much to establish. As Haig pulled reinforcements from neighbouring corps, and took two divisions from the corps to be placed in reserve, the two remaining divisions held a line that was 17,000 yards long. Currie refused to split his Corps into divisions to be spread out amongst those used in the active defence at the Somme and Ypres. G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1962), 362-82.

regiment throughout the war. He was only wounded once, slightly, in September 1918, when he was hit by a spent machine gun bullet (he claimed to be disappointed in the trifling nature of the wound: "I received a MG bullet in the thigh during an attack yesterday morning but was able to extricate it myself and carry on. I have in fact one regret, for if the thing had only gone in far enough I would have had a jake blighty... I am really beginning to think that a horseshoe hangs around my neck."⁷⁴³ On multiple occasions during the summer and fall fighting, he found himself one of a very small group of survivors, such as after Cambrai, where "of the platoon of 30 men which was intact 5 days ago, I am the only one left."⁷⁴⁴ Nevertheless, after detailing the souvenirs he would be sending home from the battlefield, Gianelli could only ask, "How inexhaustible and daring is youth?"⁷⁴⁵ All of the belligerent's front-line military forces (including the CEF) were growing younger at this late stage of the war. These young men proved as capable of carrying on the killing work of the Western Front as the battalion of old imperial veterans who had preceded them into the trenches.

In surviving at the front as long as he had, Gianelli became the emblematic PPCLI soldier, standing out to his officers and the royal family as the living template of the regimental ideal and fighting spirit that was to be presented as a statue to Princess Patricia at her wedding.⁷⁴⁶ By analyzing his writings home during the war, we can get a good sense of how Gianelli presented it to his family, how he referenced the fighting and killing, and how he could address these themes indirectly so as to describe the fighting in a positive, masculine and workmanlike vein. The silences and gaps that

⁷⁴³ Ibid., 4-5.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid. The vicious fighting of the 7th Brigade in late September is well described by McCulloch, "Crisis in Leadership," 391-5.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁴⁶ Gianelli was also attached to the King and Prince Albert while they toured the former battle-zones of France and Belgium in December 1918, during which time he was "compelled... to relate my own narrative of the Battle of Arras to the King, and did some boosting for Toronto to the Prince." Ibid., 15 Dec 1918, 5. Having been forced to tell the King something of his battle experiences did not mean that Gianelli opened up about it in his letters home. Later in the same letter, responding to a question about how he won the Military Medal, Gianelli responds that "that is impossible for me to tell you, dear ones. But be assured that it was for service and not for valour." Ibid., 7. He simply could not talk about it, but tacitly pointed out that it had nothing, specifically, to do with killing the enemy.

characterized his descriptions of the fighting would define much of the rest of Gianelli's life, and in his obituary, he was characterized as "a man so private about his personal affairs that even his closest friends didn't know the statue existed."⁷⁴⁷ To tell his friends of the statue would be to invite further questions about his fighting service, a topic that Gianelli had early developed an aversion to addressing. His example demonstrates the template that many other men, like Jack McLaren and Jim Christie, employed to avoid addressing the "ghoulish" killing realities of the Western Front. He simply focused on the things that mattered to him, and allowed him to maintain his privacy as a front-line soldier, the contents of the packages, the goings-on at home, the weather and his health (which was invariably excellent); dreams of "good food," "cold tubs," and "extravagant laundry bills."⁷⁴⁸ In the case of his description of Jigsaw Wood, Gianelli literally turned the page on the subject, and moved on with the interlocutor, "Nuff said" (after hardly saying anything at all). Unlike many of those here studied, Gianelli does not speak romantically about women throughout his letters, and he never married, taking care of his sister Alice until he died at the age of 86 in 1984.

Of all the abilities Gianelli proved to have as an infantry soldier at the front, the most important was the fact that he could shoot. Prior to transferring to the 7th Reserve Battalion and being placed on draft overseas, Gianelli described taking part in a range at Shorncliffe: "On Tuesday morning we had musketry which reminds me to tell you that I beat the whole squad both in speed and accuracy of aim. Ushers will now bring on the flowers."⁷⁴⁹ His instructors, fully cognizant of the fact that the skills and drills they taught would be used in combat in the very near future, were training men to the A3 standard to get them overseas as expeditiously as possible.⁷⁵⁰ Gianelli was naturally a good soldier, a good comrade and a fine shot, and he found himself suited to army life. He enjoyed both the sporting

⁷⁴⁷ *Toronto Star*, "Victor Francis Gianelli, 86 was honored for war service (obituary)," 8 Sept 1984, 31(18.1)-5.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 24 Oct 1918, 3.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 30 May 1917.

⁷⁵⁰ See for example, Holt, "Filling the Ranks," 1:265-267. Ryan Flavelle, "'Not Enough Food and Too Many Military Police:' Discipline, Food, and the 23rd Reserve Battalion July-Sept 1917," *War and Society*, 35, no. 2 (2016), 98-100.

competitions, and the mock-battle ranges that pitted battalions against each other to compete “for honours in the various lines of work, such as shooting, machine gun shooting, bayonet fighting, etc.”⁷⁵¹ Note that he already was describing the shooting for what it was, a job of “work.” Both work, and game were words that he would go on to apply towards the fighting done at the front, and were important metaphors that Gianelli used to explain the war to himself and his family.⁷⁵²

When on leave, Gianelli was determined to have a good time and take in as many shows as possible. For example, just prior to being sent on draft to France, he was given leave in London and not even a close call from German bombers could keep him from the shows. Determined to see something of the sights of the famous city, Gianelli, played the tourist: visited the Zoological Gardens, the Hippodrome and London Bridge Station, where he encountered a Gotha bombing raid. His description of the air-raid gives some insight into his motivations for serving with the infantry, and his understanding of the killing realities of the war prior to even arriving at it:

we saw far in the distance five or six aeroplanes and as we continued to look greater numbers became visible. We knew they were enemy machines for we could see the burst of shrapnel which was thrown from our [anti-aircraft guns]. They appeared to be flying quite slowly and as they came on, they descended gradually. By this time, Art and I were the only ones in the square. Everybody had taken cover, but I myself believe it safer in the open. Continuing to gaze, we saw several other machines appear suddenly as if from the air. This was evidently a smoke cloud which is used for protection. By grouping them we now counted about thirty-one machines in all. This bombardment on both sides was now terrific as they passed over our heads a bomb was dropped within fifty yards of us, which rocked the buildings about us and stood us at an angle of 45 degrees. At this moment, they changed their course of direction to the left and all was soon clear again. I shall not forget the experience.... at 7:30 PM I again set sail for Seaford.⁷⁵³

⁷⁵¹ Gianelli to family, 23 May 1917, 5-6. Motherwell tells of a pitched battle between his draft of reinforcements and the “guardsmen” instructing at the “bull-ring.” Andrew Thomson Motherwell, undated memoir, 7, 31(39)-9.

⁷⁵² This was a common theme that has been well studied in the historiography of British culture and the war. For example, Eksteins finds that sporting culture, which “had reached all segments of society” by the turn of the century, informed how men wrote about the war: “The war was a game, deadly earnest, to be sure, but a game nevertheless – ‘all great fun,’ as Rupert Brooke and so many others kept saying in their letters home.” Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 165, 163-172. See also, James Dunbar Campbell, “‘The Army Isn’t All Work:’ Physical Culture in the Evolution of the British Army 1860-1920, PhD dissertation, University of Maine (2003), 192-244. On the Canadian Example see, Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 122-131.

⁷⁵³ Ibid., 9 July 1917, 14-15.

In the meantime, the unscathed Gianelli had gone to a production of *Bubbly!*, a spectacle of show-girls dancing and happy music (just the thing to raise the spirits of a young man with a short pass).⁷⁵⁴ The fact that he could enjoy himself at the theatre so shortly after witnessing the face of modern war in all its impersonal horror indicates that he had the right mental attitude for the front. Good soldiers had to be able to let their minds rest, and take time away from the horrors that lived in their memories.

During the bombing raid, he had seen the wounding and death of innocent women and children, and describes his anger over the sight and desire for revenge against the perpetrators of such horror. In his next letter, he contextualizes the necessity of his being placed on draft against the air-raid: "I know this news will not be pleasant for you but the time has come when I must take my place in the fight for freedom. The time of my going is very opportune too for after seeing a helpless little child killed in the air raid on Saturday, *I am not in an any too amiable mood*. Could you blame me if I had even volunteered for the draft? I did not do this however. I was called upon and I answered 'Ready'. [Emphasis added]"⁷⁵⁵ For Gianelli, the air raid reinforced the rightness and justice of his decision to transfer into the role of front-line fighter. The unspoken assertion is that his unamiable mood would be applied towards the destruction of the perpetrators of the horror, the Germans across the way.

He makes it abundantly clear in his letters that he chose to be put into a combat role, and that, despite their fears (and his own) he was happy to be where he was, or at least happier than those at home must be: "My nature may be a wee bit more serious, but I'll never lose that youthful spirit. I have not got half the worry and burden to bear that you, Mother and Father have."⁷⁵⁶ Gianelli realized that worrying helplessly thousands of miles away was far worse than being the agent of his own experiences, and that the former role took real fortitude. He drew strength from the example of his family, and

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., 10 Jul 1917, 1-2.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., 8 Jul 1917, 8.

especially that of his mother: “You were indeed a brave little mother when you said Good-Bye to me, and I am the proudest son in the world, in just thinking that I am a ‘chip of the old Block.’ So continue to be brave and cheerful Mother, and ‘trust-me – for I’ll stick.”⁷⁵⁷ That was the best that any soldier could promise, that he would “stick;” the five letters that summed up the British, Canadian, and Patricia’s infantry ethos, to stick meant to kill, or at least to remain, armed, in dangerous places where killing could and would become necessary.

Before he departed he wrote home that he wanted to be a “White Knight,” and committed to undertake the honour of his ideals (that most difficult of tasks that humans can set for themselves). He wrote that he wanted “to become a White Knight and have no hesitation in promising that I will live up to it.”⁷⁵⁸ Gianelli never drank and only smoked one cigarette to prove that he could resist the temptation (he devotes several letters to the question of smoking at the front).⁷⁵⁹ He also proved to have legendary sticking power. The phrase “White Knight” and the chivalric ideal that underlay it is telling, demonstrating how Gianelli pictured himself prior to proceeding to France.

The emblems of his service were prized souvenirs for Gianelli, and the regalia of regiment and rank became iconic, sent home to his family as relics of his service. When he transferred out of the Canadian Army Service Corps, he enclosed his C.A.S.C. badges in a letter so that his family might have a tangible reminder of their son’s service. He was now “entitled to wear a Princess Pats Badge.”⁷⁶⁰ At the end of 1917, as a Christmas present to his family, he sent them that badge, which had been through “our second ‘how do you do’ at Passchendaele – and believe me [it] saw a bit of the real stuff.”⁷⁶¹ Later he sent his red PPCLI “flashes off my old tunic, which I wore through Passchendaele and the recent

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid., 27 May 1917, 5.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., 30 Aug 1918, 5-8, 13 Oct 1918, 5-11.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., 20 July 1917, 7.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., 31 Mar 1918, 5-6.

scraps in the Somme area”⁷⁶² The flashes and badge had become relics, objects imbued with an almost mystical quality due to the experiences of the wearer in the same way that holy relics were sought and protected during medieval times. The famous red patches of the Patricia’s became like slivers of the true cross or the finger bone of a saint for those who received them; tokens that had seen the “real stuff.”⁷⁶³

Gianelli presented the war to his parents in similar terms to the way that war was presented in the popular chivalric novels of the day; like Henty’s character, Cuthbert in *The Boy Knight*, his prowess and forthrightness had promised him a place in the society of warriors, and the patronage of a princess. He was a fit, cheerful young man with a good head on his shoulders. By showing an almost uncanny knack for survival, and a cheerful and resolute attitude in pressing on to final victory, he became the Patricia’s emblematic soldier.⁷⁶⁴ Henty’s book serves as an example of how contemporary young men were taught to fantasize and think about warfare and their part in it, namely the necessity to kill to protect their women.⁷⁶⁵ Early in the work, when the Earl of Evesham’s daughter is captured by the evil Norman cut-throat Duke in the castle across the way, the hero, Cuthbert, saves the day by putting a crossbow-bolt into the brain of the evil man riding hard with the girl to escape Cuthbert’s ambush. Of course, the abduction necessitated the siege of the evil duke’s tower, but Cuthbert had no problem discovering a secret entry, and capturing it from within. There was no tower unassailable by the right group of men, especially in the imagination of a young boy. The fact that Gianelli frames his being sent

⁷⁶² Ibid., 18 Aug 1918, 7.

⁷⁶³ McLaren recalls being sold, for 5 francs, a chunk of the “Ypres Oak,” wood (allegedly) taken from the altar of the cathedral in Ypres. This was an example of what modern day PPCLI soldiers might call “new guy games.” McLaren, “Speech to the Montreal PPCLI Association,” 2. The scene is also reminiscent of one in Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The White Company* when the three heroes are sold Holy Relics on their way to join Sir Nigel’s company. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The White Company* (London: John Murray, (1891) 1948), 251-255. On relics and emblems being sent home see, Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 278.

⁷⁶⁴ Both versions of the Gianelli statue (with hands on and off the muzzle) currently reside in the Hall of Honour at the PPCLI gallery in Calgary.

⁷⁶⁵ Bracco argues that the war “put the clock back” on modernism and that public memory and popular fiction were characterized by high diction and traditional modes. Rosa Maria Bracco, *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War, 1914-40* (Providence: Berg, 1993), 220. On medievalism in the 19th Century see, Norris J. Lacy, “King Arthur Goes to War,” in *The Arthurian Revival: Essays on Form, Tradition and Transformation*, ed., Debra N Mancoff (New York: Garland, 1992), 159-172.

on draft to France against the sight of innocent women and children maimed and killed is entirely in keeping with this narrative mode.

Many of the men of the regiment also draw overt parallels between their service and the chivalric knights of old.⁷⁶⁶ Draycot visited the knightly effigies and altar tombs of his ancestors at Draycot Church, Draycot, Staffordshire.⁷⁶⁷ Jack Munroe has Bobbie refer to men of the Patricia's as "knights and chevaliers whose names are imperishable in song and story."⁷⁶⁸ The form and function of Princess Patricia and her corps throughout the war was to recruit and bring to the field a regiment of modern knights. Even a man as jaded and poorly used as Draycot still took pride in his chivalric ancestry. It was how they understood themselves prior to the war, and occasionally during and after it. As an anonymous regimental author wrote in 1914: "The P.P.C.L.I. is a modern White Company, roving on the same soil that held its predecessor so many centuries ago... Sir Nigel with his lady's glove at Helmet was never keener for the onslaught than those upon whom his mantle has settled today."⁷⁶⁹ Here he is referring to historical fiction of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, set during the Hundred Years' War and the chivalric campaigns of the fourteenth century. The entire idea that underpins Conan Doyle's work is that men fight for the honour of the contest, and the honour of the women they left behind, an assertion that Sir Nigel makes every time he meets with someone who he might gain honour from "tilting" against.⁷⁷⁰ This is in keeping with Gianelli's sentiments towards his mother who had to endure sending her son to war. The key component is that, throughout the war, the Patricia's presented themselves as

⁷⁶⁶ This was by no means a phenomenon unique to the PPCLI. See for example, Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 156-231. Much of the secondary literature deals with how medievalism was incorporated into public memory, but the soldiers themselves (at least in the PPCLI) tended to characterize their service in a similar way. On medievalism in British remembrance of the war see, Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1995) 2014), 84, 92-3, 204-7. On medievalism in the post-war reconstruction of what it was to be male see, Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 110-159.

⁷⁶⁷ "Altar tombs and Effigies of Draycot Family, Draycot Church, Draycot, Staffordshire," photograph, 26-30-18, 27, 33, 34, *North Vancouver Archives*.

⁷⁶⁸ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 144.

⁷⁶⁹ "At the Front with Princess Pat's," 16(1.2)-1.

⁷⁷⁰ See, Diana Barsham, *Arthur Conan Doyle and the Meaning of Masculinity* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2000), 16, 234.

what they were, a battalion of soldiers as keen to fight as any group of soldiers in the history of the world, and they continue to present themselves this way up to the present day. Gianelli's visage was presented to Patricia because he exemplified the chivalric ideal of the battalion in its modern iteration.

Gianelli was not alone in wanting to be a Knight and fantasizing about it when still a lad.

Sergeant Frank S. Brown, a poet and original member of the Pats, had, in his boyhood, been fond of riding out to meet enemy posts upon his charging steed. As his brother recounts:

When we were herding cows he was always regaling me with all sorts of stories and what he intended to do. He always said that he would be a soldier, and his favorite books concerned history and biographies of soldiers... He tied a carving knife to a pole, which he attempted to use as a lance, and placing posts in the ground he endeavored to do some pig-sticking. However, his bronco would shy away suddenly every time he brought down his lance to stick the pig, with the result that he was thrown off and hurt his arm badly."⁷⁷¹

In his book of poems, written while the PPCLI hastened to the front, and presaging much of what would befall the regiment and its soldiers, Brown overtly draws the parallel to Knighthood:

Ah! Bustling warrior, but a moment yield
To prayer, as did the knight before his shield.
Then don the armour of your faith in arms,
Against the nerve-racked hardship of the field
...
Then breaks at last that awful morn of hell
Let loose—as grizzled veterans tell—
The soldier's baptism, and after that
The boom of guns his lullaby—his knell
...
The breathless rush; the charge; the tingling thrill,
As bloodhounds leapt upon their prey to kill;
The wine of slaughter, which intoxicates
The lip that touched the brim, nor drank its fill.⁷⁷²

At one of the regiment's first big fights, around the mound at St. Eloi where the battle-space was intimately close and the lines changed hands more than once, Brown was killed. He fought and died in

⁷⁷¹ Allyn W. Brown to W.E. Bastedo, 16 Mar 1965, 2, 31(10)-2.

⁷⁷² Ibid., Frank S. Brown, "The Rubaiyat of A-Man-At-Arms," in *Contingent Ditties: and Other Soldier Songs of the Great War* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd., 1915), 78.

the hope that his sacrifice would make the world safe under the rule of law, which, unfortunately, his sacrifice did not accomplish:

Ah! drink that day when Earth alone by laws
Is ruled—the consummation of our cause;
When War is banished and his gorgon face
The ready sword will, frightened, make to pause.⁷⁷³

The self-conceptualization of the sacrifices that Brown was prepared to make fit within the chivalric ideal that he had for himself, and which stemmed from his boyhood imagination. This was an important component to how men understood and presented their experiences of killing and war.

The reality of the war, far from the chivalric ideal that Brown imagined, was such that Gianelli found it could be difficult to maintain his mental conception and even faith. As he wrote near the end of the war on receiving a “sprig” of wildflower or “pressed forget-me-nots” enclosed in a letter from home, they were “a breath of fragrance from another world” and a reminder of “the old haunts, and of all things dainty and utterly remote from the sordid business of war... the squalid conditions of this primitive life. Most of all it does away with that feeling we often get, that *if one has to live like a savage, it were best to become like one*. [Emphasis added]”⁷⁷⁴ Although he remains silent on the killing itself, Gianelli thus speaks of the war and his duties as one of Patricia’s infantrymen in the same way that those who were more overt in their testimony: that the war was a squalid and primitive affair that engendered savagery in the hearts of those who fought it. The flowers, perhaps, helped Gianelli to avoid reliving these sordid events as they allowed him to forget his surroundings and remember the idealized peace of home.

Although Gianelli does not give details of his experiences of the fighting to his family, he makes it abundantly clear that killing was his job. When tasked as a company first aid man, Gianelli is quick to ensure that his mother harbours no illusions about his job: “Work with the First Aid Squad is no different

⁷⁷³ Ibid., 79.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., 24 Oct 1918, 4.

from that of the fighting man except we don't carry rifles, but you can depend we carry bombs."⁷⁷⁵ Lest his family believe that he was engaged in the largely non-combatant role of stretcher-bearer, he makes it clear to his mother that that duty was only temporary and that:

Every one in the regiment is a fighting man no matter what work he is doing. We have all [had lots] of training and all sorts of work to do. A man may be a specialist such as a riflemen, Light machine gunner; bomber; grenadier, but he is capable if needed to take up any of these. I am not doing first aid work now, but am doing the same as last summer – at work with the rifle and bomb. It is really all one and the same, and all working toward the same end – victory.⁷⁷⁶

For Gianelli, it was just work. That the work was killing other human beings was an unspeakable truth, but implicitly understood by both parties and clarified lest there be confusion. This way of speaking of the war is demonstrative of the mental attitude (and prowess, luck, and trades-craft) that got Gianelli through the war.

Although he always tried to look on the bright side of things, to his family and likely in person, the pleasantness of his existence was wildly variable. In the trenches near Passchendaele and Ypres, prior to the regiment's attack, he complains of the weather and nothing else. Then again, weather was the chief complaint of the entire Corps and Army in November 1917. Indeed, it was the foul weather that made the ridges look so appealing; the point was to take one more ridgeline such that the British Army did not have to spend all of the winter in a bog. The PPCLI portion in the battle was (in the words of a regimental historian), the resuscitation of "a campaign that was already played out."⁷⁷⁷ Despite the detonation of gigantic mines under the German positions at Meetcheele ridge (the scene of some of the fighting in 1916 that Draycot describes), the battle "played out," or bogged down over three grinding and inconsequential months that had done little to alter the situation around Ypres. For the PPCLI the culminating battle at the end of the month of October became "a series of small section and platoon

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., 10 Feb 1918, 7.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., 18 Aug 1918, 3.

⁷⁷⁷ Williams, *PPCLI 1914-1984*, 23.

battles around the German strong-points and pill-boxes.”⁷⁷⁸ But the horrors of the advance were still weeks ahead of Gianelli when he wrote his parents on October 10th, 1917: “The weather is anything but moderate in France. It is always at the extreme – very good or very bad. From now on though, we can expect poor weather, as France is always greeted with an early winter.”⁷⁷⁹ He did not dwell on the unpleasantness, and seemed content to speak about the things that he had read of home. Like the fact that his father’s hair was falling out: “‘pon my word’ old man, who took such a liking to your hair, that they stole it? Was it the barber, or did it just sort of wonder off by itself? But don’t let me kid you, Papa. You can’t have hair and brains both. You ought to have seen me, when I came out of the line after spending eleven days without wash or shave. I sure would have made a dandy freak for the Midway. ‘We feed the animals at 2 o’clock.’”⁷⁸⁰ It was a subtle and innocuous enough comment, but speaks to the ways that men saw themselves being turned into animals or savages.

What follows is silence, an unexplained gap in the record of Gianelli’s correspondence with his family. Although he had hitherto written them assiduously and sent off a letter at least once a week, during the period between 10 October 1917 and 2 January 1918 we have no correspondence from him. It is unclear why not. The January letter lacks the usual preamble about how often he had had the opportunity to write, and merely details his experiences with the regiment at Christmas. Perhaps it had taken the truly enormous “feed” (roast beef, potatoes, carrots, beans and onions, followed by a dish of plum pudding) that he had had, or the stocking filled with goodies (“Chocolate and sweets, tobacco and cigarettes, playing cards and a writing pad and shaving soap... apples, dates, figs, nuts, ginger, biscuit and jelled fruits”) that had made him feel human enough to write home.⁷⁸¹ Gianelli then discussed the

⁷⁷⁸ Williams, *PPCLI: 1914-84*, 23.

⁷⁷⁹ Gianelli to family, 10 Oct 18, 3.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 Oct 1917, 4.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2 Jan 1918, 2-3.

women's vote and the role it played in the election of the Union government: he said nothing at all about the October-November fighting.

He mentions Passchendaele only twice in the remainder of his correspondence. Once in the winter of January 1918, discussing the weather, he complains that the ground is too cold, and there is not enough mud for his liking: "I have cursed the mud many a time, especially at Passchendaele, [but] I and many others owe our lives to it. The reason is a very simple one, as a shell, will in most cases, bury itself in the mud before detonating thus preventing the spreading of shrapnel, etc. So you see, though the mud is a great hindrance, it is a life saver and keeps down the casualties."⁷⁸² The second was a brief aside to his sister remembering being inspected by the Duke of Connaught in Cadets, and saying that "He gave us a once over in Belgium, before we went into Passchendaele."⁷⁸³ Here, he ends the letter abruptly picking it up two days later, "and many miles from where I was six lines above."⁷⁸⁴ The silence that surrounded Passchendaele was such that even cursory asides were enough to give him pause when writing home; he could not bring himself to say anything about it.

We know that he was in No. 1 Company, and working as a rifleman during the advance. The war diary indicates that, after being inspected by the Duke of Connaught on Oct. 22nd, the regiment had billeted in the ruins of Ypres under continual heavy bombardment. Casualties leading up to the attack on the 31st were relatively light, due in large part to the mud absorbing the shells just as it absorbed horses and men. The attack itself, as we have seen, was chiefly remembered for the slaughter inflicted upon friendly forces instead of the killing that they inflicted upon the enemy, although both were done in goodly measure. At 5:30 PM, following Sergeant Mullin's successful assault on the pillbox dominating the battalion's position twelve hours earlier, Gianelli's No. 1 Company consolidated on the ridge and were in dire need of Lewis Gun ammunition: "There are about 100 men out in front of Pill-Box marked

⁷⁸² Ibid., 17 Feb 1918, 3-4.

⁷⁸³ Ibid., Feb 24 18, 4.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid. 5.

'X' on previous report. These are in charge of 3 Corporals and 1 Lance-Corporal. They are supported on right by party sent up by R.C.R. Position for fire is a good one. They have 2 Lewis Guns. Another party of 75 rifles command ridge and valley below on the left and join up with 49th. We have Lewis Guns but a limited supply of ammunition."⁷⁸⁵ Gianelli was one of the men manning the positions, firing into the desperately counter-attacking Germans. He was not wounded during the advance.

For Talbot Papineau, Passchendaele had extinguished his life, for McLaren his ability to find something funny in the situation; for Knight, and perhaps Gianelli, Passchendaele was the abatement of hope and compassion. Knight can fill in some of the gaps of the experience of No. 1 Company and the regiment at Passchendaele and shed light on why it was so difficult to talk about. He describes the unimaginable situations in which people were put, where to leave the duckboards was to be sucked into the ground and drowned in the mud of Flanders. This was what explained "'a remarkably low figure of wounded.' The wounded didn't live. The first waves went in carrying slatted wooden duckboards to lay down in the mud, and if a man got hit and fell off the duckboards, he just drowned slowly in the mud."⁷⁸⁶ But this slow death did not mean that they did not fight with all their power to stay alive, much to the everlasting despair of the survivors:

in a way, the horses were better off. You could shoot the horses; but it tears the intestines out of you to shoot your own wounded. You can talk of it easily, or read it easily in a story; but when it comes to doing it, you know you are cursed and are doing something that you are going to remember every night as you go to sleep or at inexplicable moments: as you lift a glass to say "Cheer-oh" to someone, or as you stand in a crowded elevator, or as you open your mouth at a party to say "Double two spades." All the rest of your life – if you are lucky enough to get out and have any more life.⁷⁸⁷

Men found themselves in the morally untenable position of realizing that they could not save their fellow comrades, but could not end their suffering either. Despite the pleas of the wounded, men

⁷⁸⁵ Lieutenant P.N. Puley, "Message No. 9," "War Diaries 1914-19," 5:05 PM 31 October 1917, Appendix B.

⁷⁸⁶ Knight, *This Above All*, 169.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid.

would have to carry on forward towards their objective until a similar fate befell them, or not, in both Gianelli and Knight's case:

If you possibly could, you did something easier and simpler and more cowardly. You would turn your head the other way... And you would pretend you couldn't hear them.... They would call: "Chum! Chum! Hey—please! Please, chum! For Christ's sake—please!" You would go on just exactly the same as you do in a city when a beggar tries to stop you and you don't want to argue with him or give in to him.⁷⁸⁸

Horror of this nature robbed Gianelli of his hitherto unquenchably good humour, and likely explains why he stopped writing his parents until he could speak about his life again with the good cheer that pervaded his correspondence.

By spring, rumours of the expected German offensive (which materialized in the form of Operation Michael in March), left Gianelli unworried. He was happy to carry on with his job and wrote that, "we will... Fight the good fight with all our might."⁷⁸⁹ Later in the same letter, he gives a bit more insight into what his life during incidental warfare was like, and characterizes it in the same way as McLaren did: "In the words of the villain 'there is dirty work to be done on the cross-roads tonight,' for at midnight we are to go forth into the stilly night (how many more 'nights') and proceed to use a little elbow grease."⁷⁹⁰ In this case, Gianelli was discussing the creation of defensive positions to meet the German offensives, but he could just as easily have been talking about raiding or listening party duty were the goal of the "dirty work" and "elbow grease" was demonstrably to kill the enemy.

Throughout, he refers to incidental contacts and barrages or strafes of the enemy with euphemisms such as "paying compliments to Fritz." His letter from March, when the regiment was in the line fighting incidentally on the Vimy front is characteristic: "we are still paying compliments and things are very noisy indeed."⁷⁹¹ He describes the enemy in much the same way as other soldiers during

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid., 170,

⁷⁸⁹ Gianelli to family, 14 Feb 1918, 2-3.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., 24 Mar 1918, 2.

the war, namely as blockheads or targets: “Fritz has started his offensive. We have not been drawn into the heavy fighting yet... but we’re ready. Cheerio!” He sums up this letter with a joke: “Frau – ‘So you vos vound in the head, Fritz? Vos it bleedt?’ Fritz – ‘Vos it bleedt? Certainly it vos bleed. Vot you expect – sawdust?’”⁷⁹² The joke, such as it is, points attention directly to Fritz being shot in the head, the subtext of the joke is that Gianelli was responsible for and ready to shoot Fritz in the head (“Cheerio!”). It was all “playing the game” to Gianelli, as it was to every other soldier who had to play war’s stupid game.⁷⁹³ But, as he wrote, the “hardest part of the game over here,” and – as we have seen – the part that tended to motivate men to kill for revenge was, “the making and the losing of chums.”⁷⁹⁴

During the German offensive itself, while the regiment largely occupied “quiet” parts of the line, or were rotated out to train, Gianelli makes it clear that the men were looking forward to the resumption of operations. Far from fearing the results of the German offensive that so worried those at home, he looked forward to the next offensive: “Just wait till the old stone wall Brigade gets another whack at them. That’s our brigade, you know.”⁷⁹⁵ This is an interesting statement considering the nickname originally referred to the 80th Brigade, BEF, and emerged out of Frezenburg and the defensive fighting at Ypres in 1915, but Gianelli has it that the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade was known by the same name after the PPCLI transferred.

When the British Army launched its offensive at Arras, Gianelli continued to discuss the battles he took part in during the Hundred Days in similar terms, and without delving into the upsetting details. He was kept out of the first wave of this advance: “on account of my having been through the two excursions at Passchendaele, last October. Was there with bells on, though, at the 2nd [“melée” Jigsaw

⁷⁹² Ibid., 31 Mar 1918, 7.

⁷⁹³ Ibid., 4 April 1918, 6-7.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., 15 Sept 1918, 4.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., 21 April 1918, 2.

Wood] and came out O.K. Cheerio!”⁷⁹⁶ Tanks and artillery had been ordered to support the initial advance (during which Gianelli had been left back), when the 7th Brigade moved through the 9th Brigade’s advance positions at Arras, one and a half company of tanks to be precise, none of which survived to take part in the second phase of the battle for Jigsaw Wood.⁷⁹⁷ Overall, Gianelli found that he “rather like[d] the style of warfare we are carrying on now compared to the trench warfare. It is more like what a boy would imagine war to be and not so much of the groundhog variety, though there are times when a dugout would sure look good.”⁷⁹⁸ He implores his family not to worry as “this is the first thing that I have ever done that has been worth while and you may just as well get the benefit of it without the heart coarsening worry.”⁷⁹⁹ We still see the young man comparing his experiences against what he had imagined war to be as a boy, almost a full year after he knew it first hand. We also see that Gianelli was still keen for the fight to the finish.

Gianelli characterized this new style of warfare that the Canadians helped create and confront in late 1918 in terms of a return to more traditional battlefield modes. Despite the technological advances that had made breakthrough at Amiens possible: “The storming of Jigsaw Wood... was not taken by tanks or artillery, but by the men alone[,] I think... [it] would have compared favourably with Gettysburg. We were there with bells on and the only thing missing was the camera man.... It was real Waterloo dope.”⁸⁰⁰ What that meant was that men armed with rifles, bombs, and bayonets (and the one Lewis Gun in the company that survived the first assault at Arras) stormed up a hillside, killing the defenders and capturing their ground, and then stormed up another defended hillside, this time with an effective barrage to precede them, and took that hill as well. Gianelli attempts to contextualize his experiences against the great battles he had read of growing up, and believed that the Patricia’s advance rated with

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., 5 Sept 1918, 2.

⁷⁹⁷ “War Diaries,” “Narrative of Operations,” 25 Aug 1918.

⁷⁹⁸ Gianelli to Family, 5 Sept 1918, 5.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid., 9 Sept 1918, 3.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid., 1 Sept 1918, 2.

them. He is telling his parents that his experiences were much the same as those of soldiers at Waterloo or Gettysburg, without saying what those experiences were. This is the second time that Gianelli uses the term “with bells on” in as many letters, and it likely referred to his fighting *accoutrement* without going into the details.⁸⁰¹

Gianelli’s terse descriptions of the fighting during the Hundred Days can be contextualized against that of a contemporary No. 1 Company rifleman/signaller, Private John William Lynch. His memoir, published 1976, elaborates upon the themes that we see Gianelli expound upon, and the killing realities of the situation No. 1 Company faced during the Hundred Days. In Lynch’s case, we see the spectrum of killing situations that existed in battle, and the myriad ways that one could kill or die on the Western Front. Lynch records that the riflemen of the regiment first knew they would be going over the top after church parade, when they were told to “stand fast,” and, “each man was given his extra water bottle, his extra bandolier of ammunition containing one hundred rounds, and as many bombs as he would take, with three as a minimum... It did not require a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that we were going over the top and that very soon.”⁸⁰² The Patricia’s moved forward to their “jump off” positions that were the former German front line trench, moving through the positions that the first wave 9th Brigade (with two attached battalions from the 8th Brigade) had taken at a high cost of casualties. Thus, his first sight of the battlefield was the mingled dead and wounded, Canadian and German, but mostly Canadian: “who had been mowed down before reaching the German trench. The light artillery had followed immediately in the wake of the attacking infantry. By the side of the road lay six artillery horses, dead, with a dead driver still astride the left horse of each pair... The gun had been taken on

⁸⁰¹ The etymology of the expression likely referred to the custom of putting bells on shoes for weddings or other special occasions but, given the context of Gianelli’s use of the expression, he was likely referring to the extra bells and whistles that he brought with him into the battle including grenades and canteens.

⁸⁰² Lynch, *PPCLI 1917-19*, 117.

forward.”⁸⁰³ The first German that he encountered was a terrified “young boy” that he very nearly shot, “a gray-clad figure” who turned out to be unarmed: “He was between two fires and the poor chap must have thought everyone in the world was shooting at him.”⁸⁰⁴ Lynch showed the German kid the position of a wounded Canadian marked by an upturned rifle, to whom he had given first aid and, speaking some German, “assured him that no one would harm him if he helped the Canadian to the rear.”⁸⁰⁵ Later, during the battle, Lynch encountered a mortally wounded German lying helpless and “half-blown in two.” The man had been lying wounded for “fully twenty-four hours” and begged Lynch and his partner to put him out of his misery. His comrade, Baker, did not think he had the stomach for such work: “If he were able-bodied, with a rifle in his hand, I could shoot him down without a thought but in his helpless condition it would be a hard thing to do.”⁸⁰⁶ Lynch suggests that they both fire at the same time so that neither would be fully culpable. Leaving him, Lynch argues, would “haunt me to my dying day,” and “Baker reluctantly agreed and I told the German we would kill him. He closed his eyes and his lips moved... perhaps in prayer, perhaps in a last farewell to loved ones. We placed the muzzles of our rifles within a foot of his head. At the word ‘Fire!’ both rifles crashed as one.”⁸⁰⁷ Here Lynch demonstrates that killing was often seen as the most merciful solution to the wounds endured on the battlefield, and that men had a great deal of power in what decision they should make with regards to taking life during the chaos of battle.

Shortly thereafter, Lynch learned of the death of his friend Boyce, one of his personal “three-musketeers” with whom he had been intimately close since beginning his signals training in Ottawa. Writing sixty years later, Lynch still found that: “My loss was as great as though both my father and mother had been killed in a terrible accident. For the first time since coming to France I felt lost and

⁸⁰³ Ibid., 122.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid., 125.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid., 140.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

helpless, and – alone.”⁸⁰⁸ In the aftermath of the devastating news, Lynch and the remainder of his company were ordered to advance to Jigsaw Wood, instead of being relieved. His sergeant gave him the “straight dope” on their situation and attack plan, “All we have to do is clear the hill of Germans, then capture the wood on the next hill, Jigsaw Wood... and we’re going to take it or we will all be pushing up daisies!”⁸⁰⁹ No barrage preceded their attack, but the demoralized state of the German defenses and the surprise attendant on an advance with no preparatory bombardment were sufficient that the defenders of the front-line trench retreated to Jigsaw Wood. Here the surviving men of No 1. Company, including Gianelli and Lynch, had plenty of targets: “McGuire took over our lone Lewis gun and wrought terrible execution on the fleeing Germans. With our rifles the rest of our crew were picking them off. I do not think a single German lived to reach the wood.”⁸¹⁰ Lynch’s killing narrative thus demonstrates the themes we have seen so often, that cold-blooded killing was often thought to be more difficult than killing an armed and dangerous opponent, that killing existed along a spectrum of moral experience that constantly presented soldiers with different situations and quandaries, and that the killing was first and foremost motivated by the death of comrades, losses that were felt more keenly (in Lynch’s case even half a century after-the-fact) than if Boyce would have “been my own brother.”⁸¹¹

Lynch’s memories of Arras also demonstrate that killing and dying were inevitably intertwined, and that all men could fight savagely in the right situation. Again, the death of a comrade and betrayal of *thémis* are presented as motivating the killing in Lynch’s case: “Moving forward, I dove into a shellhole already occupied by two [PPCLI soldiers]. One had been shot through the breast near the heart and his comrade was trying to dress the wound. A look at the wounded man told me that he was dying, if not already dead.” The latter, living comrade, “Mac” being told of the hopelessness of his

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid., 142.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid., 153.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., 154.

⁸¹¹ Ibid., 163.

efforts at first aid, responds, "This man is from my home town in Canada. He has a wife and six children, the oldest a girl of fourteen. Here he is, in the infantry, killed, while hundreds of young men without a cat depending on them are holding down bombproof jobs at the base, in the transport, or other places where they are safe. It's a hell of a system!"⁸¹² Shortly thereafter Lynch, moving towards his objective, encountered two enemy soldiers, and a lethal hand-to-hand struggle ensued:

Without even bringing my rifle to my shoulder I fired at the man on the firing-bench who was whirling toward me. My bullet passed through his chest from right to left, killing him instantly. No time to reload. I dove at the second man with my bayonet. He turned barely in time to parry my lunge and I crashed into him from the force of my rush. He dropped his rifle and threw his left arm about me. Almost before I realized what he was doing his right hand fumbled at his belt. Out came the sheath knife all German soldiers carried. Before he could draw it clear and strike I seized his wrist with my left hand. He was a burly, powerful fellow, outweighing me at least fifty pounds. I was like a child in his grasp and it would be but a matter of seconds before he could free himself and plunge the knife into my ribs or neck. But we had been trained for situations like this. Shifting my weight to my left foot I brought my right knee up with crushing force into his groin. At the paralyzing blow I felt his strength drain from him like water. With a mighty wrench I tore free of his failing grasp. A forward lunge and the point of my bayonet struck him in the breast and passed through to the hilt, leaving a few inches of steel protruding from his back. He gave a hoarse scream of agony as the steel bit through his body, then collapsed.⁸¹³

Note the almost romantic embrace that was in such deadly earnest, with Lynch facing the German with his rifle (that had no round chambered) in his right hand, and his left free, whereas the German held Lynch fast with his right arm while reaching for a weapon with his left. It is impossible to know if the soldier he describes killing had six dependant children, or a cat. Indeed, it is impossible to know if the story, published almost sixty years after the battle, actually happened.

One killing story told by Lynch stands out as emblematic of the reasons why Gianelli chose to remain silent on the subject. In the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Jigsaw Wood, each company was paraded for roll call, and the disheartening ceremony of accounting for the dead and wounded:

⁸¹² Ibid., 126.

⁸¹³ Ibid., 127.

“Often, someone shouted ‘Wounded!’ or ‘Killed!’ Now and then utter silence would greet a name.”⁸¹⁴

After completing the company roll call, the men were dismissed and had nothing to do but “[loaf] about in groups, fighting over the recent battle.”⁸¹⁵ The story that Lynch remembers, a story likely known to Gianelli as well considering he would have been at the same parade, and milled with the same men afterwards, was of the CSM’s gruesome execution of a German machine-gunner:

There was machine gun fire coming from our rear, catching some of the men. It seemed too persistent to be an accident... We located the spot and separated, coming in from opposite directions. We found a wounded German in a shellhole, both arms wrapped in bandages from wrist to shoulder. There was a machine gun lying at the edge of the hole *but it was pointing the wrong way*. The [company sergeant] major felt the barrel. It was still hot. He grabbed the bandage on one arm and jerked it off. There was no sign of a wound... He grabbed the fellow by the neck and jerked him to his feet. “You dirty, low-down rat!” he says, and swears something awful. Then he smashed the Fritz on the jaw. Fritz dropped like a log, stone cold. The major [sic] kicked his head off with his hob-nailed boots, spilling brains all around. It nearly made me sick even though I felt like killing him, myself. Boy, that sergeant major is bad medicine.⁸¹⁶

Gianelli, who could even have theoretically been the anonymous interlocutor who told the story within Lynch’s hearing, clearly was not the type of man to send such gruesome details home to his parents. If he could not bring himself to tell of the hardest parts of the killing realities of the Western Front, he tended to say nothing at all about them, except to assure his family that he was in the thick of it, with “bells on” doing the fighting work of the infantryman.

The keenness to fight remained with Gianelli until the end of the war, including the entry into Mons. He was especially proud of his place in the van of the assault: “I consider it a great honour that my platoon was the first to enter this famous city [Mons]. I would not have missed the events of the past weeks for a fortune... For us though, we still find adventure.”⁸¹⁷ A long line of French and Belgian towns from Cambrai, through Valenciennes and into Mons were liberated by the British advance, and

⁸¹⁴ Ibid., 166.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., 165. For a discussion of legitimate vs. illegitimate killing of prisoners of war see, On killing prisoners during the First World War see, Jones, *Violence Against Prisoners of War*, 70-121.

⁸¹⁷ Gianelli to family, 11 Nov 1918, 3.

Gianelli found that “the reception accorded us [the first British soldiers seen in four years] cannot be described.”⁸¹⁸ Keeping with his theme that the war was not all bad, he asks, “I wonder if you think I am exaggerating when I say that I must have received a thousand kisses during the advance.”⁸¹⁹ The kisses came not only from “fair mademoiselles, [but] others not so fair, old women, old men with greasy whiskers and scores of children.”⁸²⁰ Tasked with establishing a post in one town by himself, Gianelli found himself unable to “budge” due to the “hundreds of people thronged about me, heaping bouquets of flowers and all kinds of eatables upon me while other carried bottles of champagne.”⁸²¹ The entry into the outskirts of Mons itself, however, was defended and Gianelli records “there was quite a bit of street fighting to do here, so naturally the civilians made themselves scarce”⁸²² When the armistice went into effect Gianelli states that he and the regiment scarcely missed a stride on their advance to “drive Fritz from the city... We gave three hearty cheers for King Albert and then went about our work.”⁸²³ The work – which was no longer killing enemy soldiers, but advancing into territory that had been held by the enemy – returned to that of being “soldiers... in the mere sense of the word,” which consisted of “shine polish and parade.”⁸²⁴ Gianelli points out that the killing stood at odds with the army’s official conception of soldiering, to present themselves as “clean soldiers” and to turn out on parade with sparkling buttons and crisp drill.

During the advance into the outskirts of town, however, the soldiering had been of a different variety, as a German machine-gun position very nearly killed Gianelli and a group of advancing Canadians on the penultimate day of the war: “The night before the armistice was signed I came about

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁸²⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁸²¹ Ibid., 4-5.

⁸²² Ibid., 5. On the end of the war from the German perspective see, Scott Stephenson, *The Final Battle: Soldiers of the Western Front and the German Revolution of 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 17-109.

⁸²³ Gianelli to family, 11 Nov 1918, 6.

⁸²⁴ Ibid., 16 Nov 1918, 2.

as close to a 'napoo' as I have since I came to France and that is saying something."⁸²⁵ During the advance, a crowd of jubilant civilians had "made a screen for a Fritzie machine gun post occupying a position just above a bend in the street. We were on our guard for this sort of thing, but must admit he surprised us. We got within a short distance of him when he opened up. It was a wonder we did not all bite the dust... we had a [sic] quite a smile over it after."⁸²⁶ He does not say how, or even if the machine-gunner was silenced, but it is clear from the context that if a group of Canadian infantrymen were within a "short distance" of the gun, they used their "whizz-bangs" and rifles to kill the enemy or force him to flee, before having a nervous "smile" over how quickly they had dove for cover; "I think Fritz must have been amazed at our rapidity of movement."⁸²⁷ As during the war, so to at the end, Gianelli remained committed to sparing his family the killing details while leaving no doubt in their minds as to what his job entailed.

Victor Gianelli was chosen by his regiment's company commanders as representative of the fighting spirit and ethos of the regiment because of his attitude and proven ability to "stick" over the long term. Writing after he had been at France for almost a year, Gianelli had come to realize that: "Over here it depends a great deal on a man's own mental conception of things, as to how pleasant his existence will be. Imagination is your greatest enemy though. It sometimes plays havoc with your mental conception, no matter how hardened it may be."⁸²⁸ When the war ended, Gianelli found himself in the unique position of being "the only one in the battalion who has been in every scrap since July, 1917, who has missed but one quiet trip, who has never been off the strength of this battalion, and who

⁸²⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁸²⁶ Ibid., 5-7.

⁸²⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁸²⁸ Ibid., 21 Jul 1918, 7.

is still on the job. 'Nuf sed!"⁸²⁹ He was interviewed by the Colonel Gault and passed along what was said to his family:

He told me some things that I cannot tell you with any modesty, but as this is just between you and I, why I'll tell you... "The company commanders and I have held a conference and we have picked you... as the best type of man in the regiment... you have for some time past, distinguished yourself by turning out the best guards in the regiment and we have all agreed that you are typically representative of the model Canadian soldier."⁸³⁰

Much of his success came from his mental conception of how he should behave, think and talk about the war, how he should present himself.

An almost innate understanding of the rules, and the way that one was to behave in and out of the line (and the variability of the priorities between forward and rear zones), is plain in Gianelli's case, and is illustrated by his most oft cited anecdote about the sculpture. The first draft of the statue portrayed Corporal Gianelli, his MM on his chest, wearing Webb equipment, with his hands over his rifle barrel. Corresponding with Bastedo sixty years after the war, Gianelli demanded that, if a picture of the original statue being completed by John Tweed was to be published in Bastedo's history of anecdotes, it must be captioned thus:

Some changes were made in the final model, particularly in the position of the hands. At commencement of the sculpture, Gianelli had cautioned Tweed that the hands should not rest on the muzzle of the rifle if regulations were to be observed but Tweed decided to disregard this as he wanted to achieve a feeling of relaxation in posture. In writing later to Gianelli in June 1919, Tweed said "I have heard from Col. Gault and the hands must now be changed or you and I may be shot at dawn for breaking rules."⁸³¹

This is prototypical, quintessential veteran anecdote. It relates to something related to the war, something that the author was proud of – with the faintest hint of self-deprecation ("shot... for breaking rules"). He understood the implicit truth of army life. There is a time and place to breach regulations, but when the brass is looking is not one of those times. The reason that he understood what his

⁸²⁹ Ibid., 7 Jan 1919, 10.

⁸³⁰ Ibid., 23 Feb 1919, 4.

⁸³¹ V.F. Gianelli to W.E. Bastedo, undated, 31(18.1)-5.

sculptor did not was that he had become expert at every aspect of soldiering, and the rifle – which had been a tool for killing on the battlefield – needed to be presented properly to the audience, even when standing easy. It was the same for the sculptor Beatrice Fox, Papineau’s great romance, who was working on a statue of the Patricia soldier at Voormezele and could not get the roll of the puttees and the set of the equipment correct.⁸³² “If you intend to represent a soldier in uniform you should have the real thing before you. In the model there is not a single article of clothing or accoutrement that is correctly designated. The shape of the trousers and the way the puttees are rolled is of real importance.”⁸³³ Covering the barrel of the rifle with his hands also raised the specter of the Self-Inflicted Wound, not a reality of the front that one wanted to draw to the attention of the Colonel-in-Chief: not to mention, if the rifle is the emblematic phallus of the “Standing Easy” Patricia soldier, covering its tip presents entirely the wrong impression. More to the point, Gianelli understood that those surviving soldiers eagerly awaiting the publication of Bastedo’s history “will relish the point, as we know they rested their hands on the muzzles despite regulations.”⁸³⁴ Men like Gianelli learned the game quickly. Having a ten-minute rest on a route march or huddling against the cold of the night in the trenches, then you could assume the visibly “more relaxed” position that Tweed was going for. But, Gianelli knew that implicitly, rigidity of pose was called for at the end of the show. The fact that the anecdote also allowed him to say something of his war service without bragging or dwelling on the unpleasant bits is also characteristic of Gianelli. As Hugh Niven wrote, “Gianelli was a soldier [of the] PPCLI and what they didn’t know was not worth knowing.”⁸³⁵ What Niven did not say, but Gianelli clearly believed, was that

⁸³² Hugh Niven also criticized the set of the Webb equipment in Tweed’s sculpture, but that would ultimately have been a decision Gianelli made as he was responsible for his own kit. H.W. Niven to W.E. Bastedo, 24 Mar 1968, 31(53.2)-9.

⁸³³ Papineau, quoted in Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 335. His remark about the importance of “way the puttees are rolled” is given a special salience by the fact that his body was identified by the unique way he had of rolling his puttees.

⁸³⁴ Gianelli to Bastedo, undated, 31(18.1)-5.

⁸³⁵ Niven to Bastedo, 1 Apr 1968, 31(53.2)-9.

there were things that Gianelli knew which were best not to pass along to those at home, truths better left unspoken.

Chapter 9: Conclusion – The Legend of the Survivors of a Regiment that Survived the War

The Patricia's had proven a distinguished, recognizable, and storied regiment from their entry into the trenches through to the present day. Their legend proved their staying power, which perpetuated their legend. For example, only one Canadian character appears on the modern period society soap *Downton Abbey*, but he is – of course – a Patricia, burned and unrecognizable, claiming to be Patrick Gordan (née Crawley), the legal successor of the estate, and the heir assumed to have died in the sinking of the *Titanic*, but who claims to have simply become Canadian: "I thought you'd recognize my voice, but of course I sound Canadian now."⁸³⁶ The modern drama thus touches on a number of important themes that we have seen in the real-life examples here studied. Patrick Gordan's inclusion in the regiment demonstrates how the war was seen as a redemptive moment for the soldiers who fought it, and his character's story can easily be equated to that of R.G.H. Mansfield, a cashiered former imperial officer who had joined the Pat's immediately upon the outbreak of war and who was shot after walking out alone into No Man's Land within a few weeks of arriving in France.⁸³⁷ The idea of redemptive sacrifice, in being where you were supposed to be – at the front of your men, moving manfully towards the point of greatest danger – is prevalent in the veterans' memoirs here studied, especially in 1918. It makes up a large component of the official narrative of the regiment which reverberates in popular culture. What the show expounds upon is Peter Gordan's history as one of the men, vice women or children, who was saved in the *Titanic's* liminal sinking that plunged the world into modernity; his service, Canadianization, and amnesia were born out of his failure to die in the icy Atlantic waters, as he was duty bound to as a man. This is the same problem brought out in Conrad's *Lord Jim*: namely that when the chips were down, gentlemen were not supposed to try to save

⁸³⁶ "Downtown Abbey Transcript: 02x06 - Episode Six."

<http://transcripts.foreverdreaming.org/viewtopic.php?f=151&t=9204> (17 Aug 2017).

⁸³⁷ See for example, "Fitzgerald who died for Empire, Worked on Banff Sewer," *The Craig and Canyon*, undated (1915), 31(13)-9.

themselves from imminent death before they saved their charges, and that to do so was to betray their honour.⁸³⁸ It is also the same idea put forward by Munroe's biographers who deal with his actions at the Porcupine Lake fire, standing down a group of "navvies" with pistols drawn until the last ferry was loaded with women and children. Many were motivated by a deeply felt sense of duty and honour, and this idea impelled men forward into the killing fields.

Gianelli demonstrates what was true of many soldiers, namely that language had to be veiled and modified into a rhetoric of justifying the killing deed without describing it, and this was the same rhetoric that Princess Patricia herself produced when she met them in England. During these speeches, we can see that she was put into a difficult rhetorical position that the crown must constantly solve in dealing with this war, or any war: how to talk about the war, and the responsibilities of these soldiers to fight and kill, without mentioning the killing. This question reverberates throughout much of the wider historiography of the war. Her solution was to use the words that meant – in effect – the same thing, and focused on two themes, Pride and Glory. As she said when she greeted the regiment in Bramshott: "Much has indeed happened... much that is sad as well as glorious, – since that well-remembered day when I bade you farewell in Canada, before your departure for the front."⁸³⁹ She had watched with "keen interest" as her regiment "distinguished" itself, early and often. To her, the big battles at Ypres stood out: "I cannot help referring to that grim *struggle* known as the Second Battle of Ypres; the *repulse* of the heavy German attack on Sanctuary Wood in June 1916, when your gallant Commander, Colonel Buller lost his life;... The mud and *glory* of the Passchendaele battle, and finally the series of

⁸³⁸ We see shades of Papineau's conduct and mental struggle, for example: "It was solemn, and a little ridiculous, too, as they always are, those struggles of an individual trying to save from the fire his idea of what his moral identity should be... only one of the rules of the game, nothing more, but all the same so terribly effective by its assumptions of the unlimited power over natural instincts, by the awful penalties of its failure." Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (New York: The Modern Library, (1899) 1921), 81. See also, Mary Burgoyne "'Writing Man to Fighting Man': Conrad Republished for the Armed Services during the World Wars," *Conradian* 38, no. 1 (2013): 99-127.

⁸³⁹ "The Lady Patricia Ramsay Colonel-in-Chief Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Letters and Documents," privately circulated pamphlet, Feb. 1919, 51, 11(1)-1.

severe and successful assaults of the last year. [Emphasis added]"⁸⁴⁰ Struggle, repulse, glory, severe and successful assaults - these phrases lack specificity, but they are not exactly untruths.

Key to the legend of Princess Patricia's regiment was its direct attachment to the personage of the crown, and the personal selection of officers from amongst the Governor-General's staff, including his military secretary, the first CO of the regiment Francis Farquhar. The symbols and emblems that distinguished the PPCLI, were inspired and donated by their patroness, and men of the regiment were consistently singled out by members of the Royal Family. Niven remembers that the Queen, sharp-eyed in the receiving line for winners of the Military Cross, noted the red arm flash of the PPCLI on his uniform and warned her husband that a PPCLI man was coming up, and later invited Niven to stay for tea and view their garden.⁸⁴¹ Niven had already met the King, while he was Duke of York and Cornwall on the cross-Canada tour in 1901. Niven says that, during tea, the King recognized him as his "canoe man" on a pleasant and successful day's shooting in Manitoba, some of the best shooting of the King's life, largely because "the Mounted police... [had] kept all shooting off the Lake for a month and grain was spread all over it to attract ducks."⁸⁴² George V's cousin's regiment, in which his former canoeist had been commissioned, had become famous throughout Britain since the war began. Its exploits consumed fountains of newspaper ink during the war and beyond, and its members were marked for special attention by the Royal Family themselves.

Patricia herself mattered to the regiment, to their sufferings and victories. Her responsibility was to provide an example to men and women alike of what the men were fighting for, those chaste women

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid. See also, "Souvenir in commemoration of the royal wedding of Princess Patricia of Connaught and commander the Hon. Alexander Ramsay, D.S.O.," 11(2.3)-1.

⁸⁴¹ Niven, "A Solemn Occasion – Buckingham Palace," 2, 31(53.1)-9.

⁸⁴² Ibid. The story is plausible based on the official record of the then Duke of York's tour of Canada. On the return journey Knight writes that the Duke had some "very successful shooting" at "Poplar Point," which may substantiate Niven's account. A photograph of the royal party viewing a threshing demonstration at Poplar Point, Manitoba shows that he was near (50 kms) to Lake Francis (which is due north), so it is thus plausible that the King did go shooting with Niven in 1901, although an aged Niven recalls it as happening in 1902. ("His Royal Highness is an excellent shot, ranking with the few very best in our country.") E.F. Knight, *With the Royal Tour* (London: The Victoria League, 1902), 326, 359-361.

and good things that they had left behind and were worth defending; “from first to last she has been the Fair Lady to whom many gallant knights made obeisance, with grateful, loyal hearts.”⁸⁴³ She stood for the personage of the empire that the men were fighting for, the very old idea that impelled them into industrial war. The killing was simply an extension of her men’s responsibility to duty, and chivalry.

Her morganatic marriage meant giving up her title as Her Royal Highness, and her title of Princess, but the legacy that she left the Patricia’s was the position of “Commander-in-Chief” of the regiment. Although she lost her title in marriage, the position outlived her. It was a position won by the legendary fighting stories that had proliferated during the war. The regiment created a new inheritance that could withstand, in name, the capricious corpus of British inheritance law. If her name mattered to the regiment’s legend, it was promulgated solely by her men’s killing prowess, and the legends that grew out of it. This fighting record ensured the PPCLI would be one of three battalions maintained into the peace as part of the Permanent Force. Indeed, the King had directly interceded with the Canadian government on this issue, specifically as it related to his granting Patricia the title of Colonel-in-Chief. As Williams has it, “On 22 February, 1918, the King appointed Princess Patricia to be Colonel-in-Chief of PPCLI. It was an honorary position which she was to hold for the rest of her life... the King had given his approval only after being assured that the regiment would become part of Canada’s permanent forces after the war.”⁸⁴⁴ Here we see that the legend of the Princess Pat’s had so impressed His Majesty that he used what little substantive power he had over the Canadian government, the ultimata of rank and title, to ensure that they would be part of the Permanent Force. Perhaps it had been McLaren’s performance at the Apollo that had sealed the deal.

As with Patricia, so too for the private soldier “taken-on-strength” of the regiment throughout the war: everyone had their role within the hierarchy of service. As Colonel-in-Chief, Patricia’s role was

⁸⁴³ Mary McLeod Moore, “The Princess of the Northland,” *Illustrated London News* 103(4168), 8 Mar 1919, 340, 11(2.1)-1.

⁸⁴⁴ Williams, *First in the Field*, 133.

to gain the obeisance of modern knights and celebrate their exploits, bearing with them during the war. For the men of the regiment, it was to work towards killing the enemy: often this was dangerous, disgusting, extremely unpleasant work; the role of infantry soldier is somewhat typecast. Often too, most individuals were not afforded an opportunity to kill, and some went through their entire war service without seeing a German, but even these men had to be prepared at any moment to meet the enemy in mortal combat. Although the broad strokes of their performance were the level of high command, the detail of the private soldier's role was largely spelled out as death and destruction. And a lot of it was improvised. As we have seen, many men found ways to want to be there, or to explain away (or sing away) their not wanting to be there. They were all playing roles; that the private soldier on the battlefield had considerable agency in deciding how to play that role is often underappreciated in the historiography.⁸⁴⁵ Experts rose to the top throughout the organization, and proliferated through the BEF and CEF.⁸⁴⁶ During the war, each sought to become expert in helping along the killing, and hastening final victory in their own way. McLaren whilst performing was helping the work along by somehow making the killing and dying palatable, and – by presenting characters like “Garrick, an actor. Delilah, a maid. [and] Slicky Slattery, a burglar” – they could make the “dirty work” of the soldier's existence appear hilarious.⁸⁴⁷ Battles were shows.

An example of the killing agency that men had, separate from the military's strictly delineated hierarchy of rank, is provided by Lynch. He tells the story of a feud carried on in earnest with a “half-breed,” “beedy-eyed” “Sergeant Clapp.”⁸⁴⁸ As Lynch tells it, the jumped-up NCO was constantly trying to

⁸⁴⁵ The agency of soldiers is an important component to Smith's work, and he has done much to demonstrate just how negotiated the power relationships between soldiers and their commanders were. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*, 11-17. For an overview of historical understandings of agency as they relate to dogs in the First World War see, Pearson, “Dogs, History and Agency,” 129-35. On the Canadian soldier's response to being largely written out of the official history see, Cook, *Clio's Warriors*, 89-92.

⁸⁴⁶ Of course, especially within the infantry, were often killed doing their jobs. See for example, Griffith, *Battle Tactics*, 44-9.

⁸⁴⁷ Norman Clarke, P “Programme,” undated (1916), 39(1)-1.

⁸⁴⁸ No one with that name served in regiment.

haul him in before the drumhead, throwing his Webb kit (which his friends had brought aboard) off a transport train he had missed and charging him with AWL, together with the loss of his kit. Lynch was sentenced to 10 days Field Punishment No. 1, which he endured shortly before Arras. The night before the regiment went over-the-top, Clapp sent him on a dangerous mission to intercept a messenger in the dark of night at an enemy-zeroed cross-roads. When the battle arrived, it became Lynch's turn to

make [Clapp] squirm. "Well, sergeant... I hope your affairs are all in good shape, for I have a feeling this will be your last battle." ... [he] had proved beyond a doubt that he would use his authority to have me disgraced or killed. One final solution lay in my hands. I could shoot him at the first opportunity. I could not bring myself to decide... and left it up to the events of the coming battle. Perhaps we both might be killed.⁸⁴⁹

"Fragging," often more rumour or implication than reality, was the ultimate power of the soldier. When battle started men died, and autopsies were not conducted.⁸⁵⁰ A Canadian bullet worked much the same as a German one. Indeed, the first officer casualty of the regiment had been Captain Newton, who was shot by a Patricia sentry when he could not remember the password.⁸⁵¹

Sergeant Clapp emerges as the antithesis to Gianelli's upright, team-oriented and fair-dealing NCO, the character that was made official by the officers of the regiment in choosing him for the statue. Ultimately, Lynch "buries the hatchet" with the sergeant doing heroic work that had everything to do with killing, insofar as killing is defined as the ability to remain, alive and armed, in killing situations. Their platoon desperately needed water, and the little that had been sent forward had been pinched by another company, so Lynch led a party of three including his sergeant to a disabled tank to recycle the water from the radiator. Braving heavy fire, applied by increasingly demoralized and underequipped

⁸⁴⁹ Lynch, *PPCLI 1917-19*, 121-122.

⁸⁵⁰ The term dates from the Vietnam war and refers to killing a superior with a fragmentation grenade. On "fragging" in war see, Holmes, *Acts of War*, 329-31.

⁸⁵¹ Of course, this "fragging" was entirely accidental. As Hodder-Williams tells it, "Captain D.O.C. Newton, losing his way in the darkness, walked through the lines between two outposts and found himself in No Man's Land, going towards the German trenches. Turning back he was challenged by his own men, but apparently failed to hear... the sentry on duty, getting no reply to his challenge, fired, only to recognize his officer's voice as he fell." Hodder-Williams notes that Newton's dying words were forgiveness of the sentry "The gallant and mortally wounded officer's last effort at speaking was to let it be known that he should not have been where he was and that the sentry only did his duty." Hodder Williams, *PPCLI*, 2 vols., 1:24.

men (boys with mouldy hunks of wheat-less bread and chestnut coffee in their packs⁸⁵²), the trio managed to fill their section's canteens and return to friendly lines under heavy fire, Lynch saving the sergeant's life after the latter was wounded. Their action allowed the survivors of his platoon to carry on the fight until they were relieved after taking Jigsaw Wood, and before being rotated out of the line and back into at Tilloy/Cambrai: the men endured successive, exceptionally costly, but ultimately successful offensive battles that killed more men than at any point previously in the war.

Knight wrote *Lassie Come Home* in which he (like Munroe) describes battles, all battles, in terms of a dog fight. Coming to the aid of a hard-pressed veteran set upon by two cutthroats, or fighting off a pair of dogs until one submitted before escaping to lick her wounds, Lassie is imbued with the fighting spirit of the regiment, loyalty being the most important component underlying every decision she makes: "She had never attacked man in her life, and she was not of a ferocious breed. Yet, once the conviction held her, she did not hesitate, nor did she go warily."⁸⁵³ This is myth, but it is myth that framed the testimony of many of the veterans here studied. Knight knew the horror, cowardice, bravery, and death of battle, which forever shut its participants "apart" from those who had not had the hard experience. But he also understood that love and loyalty could lead men and dogs alike back home to themselves, and was the foundation of their fighting spirit. Munroe explicitly has Bobbie address this problem. Reflecting on the war years he has it that the killing was a "bitter education for me. I had seen men hunting and killing moose and deer in my Northland. But I had not imagined that they hunted and killed each other, to say nothing of horses... it seemed a wicked and useless waste of life to me!"⁸⁵⁴

During the war, the necessity to kill was easily enough blamed on enemy "autocracy," the atrocities it

⁸⁵² Lynch, *PPCLI*, 122. In the food situation in Germany see also, Laurence Moyer, *Victory must be Ours: Germany in the Great War, 1914-1918* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1995), 236-61. Jones notes that every belligerent nation prioritized the front-line soldier for food and supplies with the civilian of only secondary importance. Heather Jones, "The Great War: How 1914-18 Changed the Relationship between War and Civilians," *The RUSI Journal* 159, no. 4 (2014): 89.

⁸⁵³ Knight, *Lassie Come Home*, 209.

⁸⁵⁴ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 132.

committed, and the all-consuming need to defeat it; but after the war, “thoughts as black as crows” plagued Munroe’s days, thoughts that were ultimately banished only by the faithful friendship of Bobbie. When the latter died, Munroe never got another dog.

Knight, as he does so often, also presents the other side of the coin of the soldiers’ existence, and describes the end of the war in a way that is radically at odds with the “official” narrative of the PPCLI homecoming to England and Canada, which focuses on Patricia’s wedding and the triumphant return of the regiment to Ottawa. He describes what has become known as the Nivelles Mutiny, which beset the regiment a month after the armistice was declared. The mutiny consisted largely of a failure to parade by a number of companies, some of whose men went to attend a political gathering in Mons at which at least one Red Flag was raised.⁸⁵⁵ When ordered to march from Nivelles to Genval, two companies did so in good order, but two others formed a mob who “surrounded [the marching companies], broke into their ranks, tore packs and equipment from their backs and unhitched the horses from the company cookers – the most violent incident of the ‘mutiny.’”⁸⁵⁶ Eventually a deputation of soldiers, including Eric Knight, was sent to the brigade commander, Brigadier-General Clark. Knight sent a narrative of his experience of the mutiny which, of course, is grounded in the betrayal of *thémis* intendant on finishing the war and finding their officers desert them to the caprices of “other men with badges,”⁸⁵⁷ officers who had no experience of front-line fighting: “We felt as if we had all stuck together in the war – officers and other ranks – and the minute the armistice was signed you left us.”⁸⁵⁸ Gianelli was, at the time of the mutiny, tasked to the King’s Guard in Belgium and away from the regiment.

⁸⁵⁵ McCulloch, “Crisis in Leadership,” 397.

⁸⁵⁶ Williams, *First in the Field*, 145.

⁸⁵⁷ Williams describes it further as: “the chain of comradeship was broken. The new officers, insensitive to that mutual respect between all ranks which was the key to the Patricias’ unfailing discipline, fell back on rank as their source of authority and their soldiers resented it.” Ibid., 144.

⁸⁵⁸ Knight quoted in, *ibid.* 146.

The immediate outcome of the mutiny demonstrates something of the character of the regiment and its founder, Hamilton Gault. It also speaks to the familial relationship of officers and men. Knight tells of how, in a desperate attempt to bring an end to the mutiny and keep his fellow soldiers' actions from escalating into "something ugly," he had talked of food with the mutinous men. They could not decide on whether or not to give up on their mutiny, and had not eaten in a full day, but the mob had not descended into looting due to the exhortations of the "cooler heads," which included Knight. Hungry and dispirited, the men decided to return to Battalion HQ at Nivelles, formed up in column of route, and began to march. They were met on the road by Hamilton Gault, who could still sit well in the saddle, despite his missing leg, and who had hastily returned from leave: "the voice of Olympus had sounded, and you were back, coming down the street... with your eyebrows in a straight line, and I knew someone was in for hell, and I didn't want it to be me. And when you lined us up in the hotel and started talking to us, and told us what fools we had been – it was all over and some of the men actually began crying."⁸⁵⁹ Gault punished the regiment like a group of naughty children: "he paraded them in full marching order with every bit of operational kit they could carry and led them on a totally pointless twenty-mile route march. They returned to Genval singing."⁸⁶⁰ After the cathartic route march, the normal ways of the regiment set in once more and the PPCLI was free to carry on with the legendary events of its existence. With Gault as the regiment's father back at the helm, the men could get back to waiting out the long journey back home, and suffering through the daily routine of parades.

⁸⁵⁹ Knight finishes his letter with an anecdote of Gault that speaks to his ability to get men to love him, and follow him, even if the relationship was often capricious: "the only time I think you looked directly at me was when we were playing football at some godforsaken place after the war and you came out and played goal, and a little Belgian chap asked you why you didn't play forward. You said: '*Par-ce-que j'ai per-due mon jambe, et c'est impossible pour moi a courrir [sic] en-core.*' I remember the words exactly, and then you turned to me, playing full back, and laughed. I laughed, too, because you spoke such a meticulously military French, with all the words in a neat row, standing on parade." Knight quoted in, *ibid.*, 148.

⁸⁶⁰ The formal process of military justice also punished the mutineers. In the 7th Brigade: "Ninety-four men were dealt with by their commanding-officers... One NCO and seven men including two PPCLI privates, Butler and Nicholas, were found guilty by court-martial of mutiny without violence and were sentenced to five years' penal servitude." *Ibid.*, 147.

Nevertheless, henceforward they (and the rest of the Seventh Brigade) would have to suffer the ignominy of being “accompanied from place to place on their demobilisation journey home by armed police escorts.”⁸⁶¹ The army was not going to take any chance with two or more battalions of potentially mutinous and revolutionary soldiers, even though the men of the PPCLI remained docile and obedient to command.

Love, love spurned and love lost (both between men and men, and men and women) remained a common theme of the regiment both during the armistice and the war.⁸⁶² Only by understanding it can we hope to understand the logic and context of battle. This is borne out by an important addendum to

⁸⁶¹ McCulloch, “Crisis of Leadership,” 399.

⁸⁶² The philosopher Gray calls love “War’s Ally and Foe.” Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*, 59-95. Van Herk writes that “It is ultimately only possible to understand war if we understand love and love lost.” This author and professor van Herk both independently arrived at that statement. She points out the perils which dichotomies present, such as those of compel and impel, and hot and cold blooded, but employs one of her own: “Perversely, love is often depicted as a version of battle, and the tolerance and gentleness of love are readily sidelined in favour of the adrenalin-fuelled excess of combat. History can become a skewed archive of what we choose to ignore, what we choose to highlight, what is told and what is kept secret. The tension between memory and the desire to forget is one of its bitter fruits. Are we all collaborators then? How can we critique war when it is, once past, an element that we seek to erase or transcend and when peace, so elusive, is a yearning more than an accomplishment?” Aritha van Herk, “Preface: Bearing Witness,” in *Bearing Witness: Perspectives on War and Peace from the Arts and Humanities*, ed., Sherrill Grace, Patrick Imbert, and Tiffany Johnstone (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), xvii. Atwood, for her part, also addresses this issue in a poem:

“... I tell
what I hope will pass as truth.
A blunt thing, not lovely.
The truth is seldom welcome,
especially at dinner,
though I am good at what I do.
My trade is courage and atrocities.
I look at them and do not condemn.
I write things down the way they happened,
as near as can be remembered.
I don’t ask *why*, because it is mostly the same.
Wars happen because the ones who start them
think they can win...
But it’s no use asking me for a final statement.
As I say, I deal in tactics.
Also statistics:
for every year of peace there have been four hundred
years of war.”

Margaret Atwood, “The Loneliness of the Military Historian,” *Morning in the Burned House* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996), 49-53.

Mullin's story at Passchendaele that must addressed, for – amongst other things – it teaches us about how the war taught men how to kill, and – perhaps paradoxically – taught them “mercy in matters of morality.”⁸⁶³ Enlisting as an original, Hugh McKenzie was commissioned from the ranks as a machine-gun officer as he gained a thorough appreciation for the automatic firearm during his service with the regiment. A native of Inverness, McKenzie left a wife and children behind in Verdun, Quebec. McKenzie's friend, Sydney Bruneau, learned the other half of his domestic story while serving with the Board of Pension Commissioners (as head of the Investigative Branch), dealing with the case of his widow:

She had had five illegitimate children since August 1914 and as I remember had lived with a man as his wife for some time and I believe had in consequence forfeited her separation allowance... The army had taught me mercy on matters of morality which I regarded as the normal risks of war... I had often translated letters in French for my fellow soldiers (and even officers) and in Mackenzie's case I was aware of the fact that he had maintained relations with a woman a few miles behind the lines.⁸⁶⁴

What role did his wife's infidelity play in his dash and courage at the front? What role did his playing Lothario outside the line have on his behaviour inside of it? He seemed to be the embodiment of the chivalric characters that Conan Doyle imagines, carrying on intrigues and romances behind the lines while leading his men valiantly and – ultimately – “winning his spurs” as an officer. Of course, those heroes tended to have their wives wait faithfully at home, fending off pernicious villains who remained behind, and equally pernicious advances by foreign ladies.⁸⁶⁵ It must certainly have been a factor in his decision-making. He changed his will to make his mother the primary beneficiary in March 1915, “In the event of my death I give to my mother Mrs. June M^cKenzie 23 James St dundee Scotland all my back pay that may be due to me also the watch I am wearing. And I give to my wife Marjory M^cKenzie 297

⁸⁶³ A.S. Bruneau to Cole, 12 Jun 1970, 2, 31(14)-2.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid. “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” John 8:11 KJB.

⁸⁶⁵ This is the plot of both Conan Doyle's *White Company* and Henty's *Boy Knight* for example. It seems that a similar break of faith had occurred for Gault, who was so keen on Conan Doyle's symbolism that he made the put the “Marguerite” flower on the first regimental badge as a token of his vow. The marriage did not survive the war. Williams, *First in the Field*, 118-24.

Gertrude Ave Montreal Canada the remaining part of my property and effects.”⁸⁶⁶ By this point, he had already won the DCM for surviving a direct hit on his machine gun position (by an enemy machine-gun team) before stripping the gun of usable parts, returning to HQ and carrying a message through heavy fire with “the utmost coolness.”⁸⁶⁷ He also won the Croix de Guerre “for gallant conduct in the field in March 1916.”⁸⁶⁸

Passchendaele was a battle that called for the acme of suicidal courage and saw the end of the question of what might happen if McKenzie returned home. The official tale of his deeds during that battle is recorded thus:

Seeing that all the officers N.C.O.s of an infantry company had become casualties and that the men were hesitating before the nest of enemy Machine Guns which were on Command[ing] ground and causing severe casualties, he handed over command of his guns to a N.C.O. rallied the infantry, organized an attack and captured the strong point. Finding that the position was swept with machine gun fire from a pill box, which dominated all the ground over which the troops were advancing, Lieutenant McKenzie made a reconnaissance and detailed flanking and frontal attacking parties, which captured the pill box, he himself being killed while leading the frontal attack. By his valour and leadership this gallant officer ensured the capture of this strong point and so saved the lives of many men and enabled the objective to be obtained.⁸⁶⁹

Knowing the fuller truth of McKenzie’s story, and having known the man who saved so many lives by sacrificing his own personally, taught Bruneau peace and forgiveness (his fellow board members were quicker to condemn widows in circumstances such as McKenzie’s).⁸⁷⁰ Men like Bruneau, who had seen the war in all its terrible detail had already had their moral fabric twisted and pulled and changed by living the nuanced job of professional killer. They had also seen love blossom in its twisted and cracked

⁸⁶⁶ Hugh McKenzie, Lt (1158), “Will,” 14 Mar 1915, Service Record, RG150, box 6971, file 42, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=160117> (17 Aug 2017).

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid., “Casualty Form.”

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁰ On the moral judgements passed by the Canadian Patriotic Fund, see Desmond Morton, “Supporting Soldiers’ Families: Separation Allowance, Assigned Pay, and the Unexpected,” in David Clark MacKenzie (ed.), *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 177-94. See also, David Laurier Bernard, “Philanthropy Vs. Welfare State: Great Britain’s and Canada’s Response to Military Dependents in the Great War,” Master’s thesis, University of Guelph, 1992, 29-31.

environs. The love and ultimate forgiveness of those who suffered during the war were staples of their accounts of it. Killing on the battlefield was, in part, a function of that love.

Draycot preserved and sent to the regimental archives a newspaper article that speaks to how this love manifested itself within the regiment after the First World War, and how the regiment remained an idyll of fellowship and family for boys and dogs alike: "There is more to a regiment than a bloody past and a long casualty list. A regiment has a heart. Especially for a small boy, born and raised among soldiers, a regiment is very, very human. Some barrack-room philosopher once noted that an army camp is paradise if you are a small boy or a stray dog. And it's true."⁸⁷¹ As an officer's son and base brat, Worthington had spent his long idle time with his dog in the company of the regiment's soldiers, eating with the colonel, and taking part in manoeuvres by hiding under the floor-boards of a tracked personnel carrier while being fed peanut-butter sandwiches. Here he felt the true love embodied by the regiment, "the Pats belonged to me, and I to the regiment."⁸⁷² Such had been the case since the Originals of 1914 were gunned down at Frezenburg, and again at Sanctuary Wood, and again at Passchendaele (and again and again during the Hundred Days). The regiment regenerated and regenerates perpetually because young men (and young women and old women and old men) believe in it and love it. This is the idyll by which men define themselves at war, and by which they chose to go in the first place. When the idyll is shattered at war, men are prone to violent killing rage.

Perhaps paradoxically, although men tended to talk about women more than killing, they also tended to write to women about the killing frequently. We have already encountered Talbot Papineau's letter to Cecil Buller, responding to her request for general impressions of the front. Papineau responded with two pages of general reflections, and chief amongst them were his thoughts on killing. N.F. Sinclair provides another example of the brusque way in which men described their occupations to

⁸⁷¹ Peter Worthington, "The Princess Patricia's A Little Boy, A Dog, A Regiment: It Was Easy To Love These Men," September 15th 1964 *Toronto Telegram*, 31(4)-4.

⁸⁷² Ibid.

women with a place in their heart: “We leave for France tomorrow and as I don’t remember how many Germans you asked me to kill for you I’m going to do ½ doz.”⁸⁷³ But such exuberant utterances tended not to survive first contact with the enemy. By May 15th, 1915, for example, Sinclair was writing about the “savageness” of the Germans, “killing and torturing the wounded. They are furious with colonial troops especially Indians and Canadians... It is their last desperate onslaught, so if it is strongly repulsed they can do nothing but flee across the Rhine [sic].”⁸⁷⁴ Bunyan had replied to Sinclair with a letter that stated that he must be enjoying “something like a fight in the olden days.”⁸⁷⁵ Wounded before Frezenburg, Sinclair wrote Bunyan that he was chafing at the bit to return to: “his chums at the front... What fighting I did is not a patch on what is going on now and in addition there are a few pals to be avenged. Baldwin is in the casualty list today too.”⁸⁷⁶ Revenge continually emerges as the chief impetus for killing. For Sinclair, it replaced the bombast he had exhibited prior to arriving at the front.

Sinclair makes clear the value that Bunyan’s letters had for him; they were little portraits of a cherished world that had existed in the soldier’s imagination, and a temporary mental respite from the much more dangerous world that they were faced with on a day to day basis. Despite confessing to be “something of a coward,” he nevertheless reflects on his day-to-day occupation as a killer:

Do you know this kind of grenade fighting? Well it is a return to the old fashioned way of fighting by throwing stones at each other only in the present case the stones are highly perfected bombs... So thre[e] of us are sent crawling out between the lines loaded up with the heavier bombs... Supposing there is no alarm and we succeed in getting within 20 yards of our object. We get everything fixed quietly – then on the whispered command we light the fuse going and let drive... Anyway 4 high explosives will stop them for a time.⁸⁷⁷

In return for Bunyan’s next letter, (which he describes as akin to “a treat of strawberries in the desert”), Sinclair speaks to his motivations in taking life. The peace granted by her letter filled Sinclair with a

⁸⁷³ N.F. Sinclair to K. Bunyan, 17 Dec 14, transcr., 16(24.1)-1.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid., 15 May 1915.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

desperate desire to be alive; a mood that – perhaps paradoxically – made him excited at the prospect of meeting the enemy in combat:

I've got to the stage that I am not capable of forming the belief that we are so very much better than the horses in the field... The other night I lay tossing about trying to sleep but my mind was too active. I thought of the hum drum existence the low standard of morals, all the discomfort... and I felt surprised at my desire to continue to exist. If we had been ordered to meet the enemy that night, I'd have relished it and would have gloried in shedding blood just for the sake of doing it.⁸⁷⁸

Sinclair is talking about the cultivation of his hatred, the sharpening of his disgust at the unpleasantness of life into a tool to attack the enemy.⁸⁷⁹ Something of Shay's betrayal of *thémis* exists here too, the savageness of living like an animal given as his reason for taking life like an animal. Sinclair transferred to the Royal Air Force in 1917 and was killed before the end of the war. As an infantryman and airman, he lived by a simple motivating principle: "The desire to do without being done is the predominant one."⁸⁸⁰ As we have seen, this was the motivation of most of the soldiers in the line throughout the war.

The mechanisms and narrative devices that these men used *during the war* to deal with their unimaginably horrific experiences – black humour, pride in regiment and comrades, alcohol, religion, smoking, and silence – were the same as those that they used after the war when explaining their experiences to others. Obviously, the character and import of those stories changed depending on the audience, and the timing of the storytelling. The early 1930s, when the country was somehow falling apart and everything seemed worse than it had been before the war began, many took time to dwell upon and enunciate the horrors of the war, and – in so doing – profess the uselessness and utter folly of that war and all wars. But then Hitler – emboldened by this narrative, and deeply broken by the First War – decided to go another round, and the import, substance, and emphasis of veterans' stories changed. Now the veterans of the First War had to explain it to the next generation of fighters and the

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid., 27 Sept 15.

⁸⁷⁹ For more on this concept as it relates to the First World War see, Peter Gay, *The Cultivation of Hatred: The Bourgeois Experience Victoria to Freud* (New York: Norton, 1993), 514-28.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid.

society that sent them. That generation needed to be given the rhetorical context for carrying on the fight against daunting odds.⁸⁸¹ What they said, was that the war was simply death, pure and simple, and its concomitant killing, and the cause of that killing was the love of family, home, regiment and comrades. These were the factors that impelled men to kill, together with the daunting and ultimate authority of the machine that ruled their lives.

Jim Christie, who won the MC at Passchendaele by covering McKenzie's and Mullin's charge (keeping the enemy's heads down, or on the swivel, or stopping their movement indefinitely) and delivering important dispatches about the tactical state of the battalion that allowed the battalion to communicate accurate information to the guns, left little in the way of written records: nevertheless, others wrote of him (and write of him). While a young man, Frank Leigh-Spencer had befriended the elderly Christie who had, at long last, returned from the bush at Jasper to a life in retirement, but found that he encountered a new problem, hitherto unknown in the wilds: "he became, for the first time in his life, a lonely man." But, Christie was not a man to leave a problem unsolved, "all his life Jim had solved problems by taking the most logical route... He decided to get married." The romance had started in France when Christie had responded to a note in a pair of knit socks he had received, "while he was sweating it out on the Canadian front in... 1915."⁸⁸² Christie ultimately found the love of a wife overseas, although it took him a few decades to consummate the acquaintance. Christie was, after all, an extremely patient man.⁸⁸³

⁸⁸¹ Knight's novel is a perfect example of the instructive emphasis placed on war narrative written during the Second World War. So too are the essays written by Gregory Clark during the war. "What is here? Important things. Non-command decisions. Survival tactics for far behind the front. How a young officer can overcome his fear of sergeants. Stratagems. How to bury a comrade without a Bible, contrary to the King's Regulations. Premonitions. Lessons in fear. Obscenities in no man's land. Agreeable moments under fire." Gregory Clark, *War Stories* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1964), forward.

⁸⁸² Frank Leigh-Spencer, "Jim Christie vs. Grizzly," unpublished manuscript (1993), *Salt Spring Island Archives*.

⁸⁸³ Ibid. "Ma Christie," né Elizabeth "Betty" Calder, "was kindly and generous to a fault. She had been a professional cook most of her life so the fare she put before Jim was a constant variety of delicacies, a rather startling change from his 50 monotonous years of bannock, beans and bacon." She only had one fault, "which

In Leigh-Spencer's account we also see the way that the bear story (and specifically the phrase "I have more wire in me than a portable radio," which ended the conversation) was his means to gloss over a rendition of his experiences as a sniper in France. He understood that they were the real foundation, or consummation, of his legend. They were what allowed him to present himself not as a victim of nature's savagery, a man crippled by the agony of the assault, but as an agent of the death and suffering he had learned first at the bear's paws and jaws. He also felt that the stories of his time in France and Belgium were immensely more difficult to tell than the one about the bear. The same went for McLaren's post-war reminiscences, and many of the conversations and anecdotes shared by veterans at the front; and the same went for Gianelli's letters to his family.

Christie understood the size of his legend while he was still alive, and he also understood that it rested in large part on his proven ability to kill the enemy and did not require his speaking to the act itself. Hugh Niven tells one anecdote that speaks volumes about Christie's self-conception, and understanding of his own legend:

One year, Hammie Gault sent Christie a large photo of himself for a Christmas present. Christie came to Victoria to see me and borrowed a tunic of mine, put on his own medals and had his photograph taken. He told the photographer to enlarge the picture one size larger than the one he had received from Hammie. I thought Hammie would die laughing when he received this beautifully framed photograph.⁸⁸⁴

The hint of a smirk on the lips and shattered jaw of Christie and the twinkling eyes are full of import – as always. But the message of the picture is clear: the twinkling eyes are evidence that Christie understood his legend, ultimately, to be greater (or "one size larger") than that of Gault because of his service as a man-killer. He was a man who killed scores of men, perhaps (probably) a score of scores (400) or more. Gault had merely created the regimented space he needed to propagate his own enduring legend. This legend had grown so large, in the words of his obituary, that "no re-union of the Princess Pats [was]

originated in her tongue – it was never still, but at the same time, never malicious – it just clattered from dawn 'til dusk." It was in "escaping" that tongue that Christie met Leigh-Spencer and told him the bear story.

⁸⁸⁴ Hugh Niven, "An Unforgettable [sic] Soldier," *The Patrician*, undated clipping, 31(28)-2.

complete without some reminiscence of... his exploits of courage, his independence of spirit and his whole-hearted comradeship.”⁸⁸⁵ Note that the author tactfully leaves out what ultimately was the foundation of his legend, Christie’s killing prowess.

Walter Draycot presents his homecoming as a disheartening affair characterized by a contest with grubby local political gangs, and his becoming embroiled in a fight that he had no stomach for. Seeking to resume his civic duties, he became involved in the electoral process with the goal of ensuring fair elections in his riding; there Draycot found obfuscation and skullduggery. “Stealing into the enemy’s camp” to gain a bit of intelligence was commonplace work for Draycot during the war, but when he attempted it at home he found that the political gang he combatted was fighting in earnest. His house was almost burnt to the ground and his workshop was. He received a “pay-telephone” message that threatened his life if he did not stay out of politics: “In these days one carried a pistol for protection. Two of my friends carried both pistol and a ‘black-Jack’ (life preserver). This was an aspect of CIVIL WAR, with thrills aplenty.”⁸⁸⁶ Draycot decided that resistance was futile, and it did not really matter which gang got in anyway,

It was a futile effort to combat them singly. Living alone, and virtually fighting alone... My friends, many in numbers but few in contact, feared to visit me... History informs us of many “Daniels” who “dared to stand alone” but their sacrifices brought what? A resumption of “*in statu que ante*” therefore, why be a “Daniel” for others whom “Hath no Stomach to this Fight!”⁸⁸⁷

Here Draycot is admitting that, having mastered killing men at war, he found that he did not have the stomach to undertake a killing fight at home. He sought peace:

There remained but one thing to do. . . Retire and recuperate. My resignation was handed in the School Board, as a Trustee, other offices were relinquished... Church and organizations, parties and gatherings, All were abandoned. Peace, with Nature as my companion and advisor, in the

⁸⁸⁵ “Obituary,” *Saanich Peninsula and Gulf Islands Review*, 7 June 1939, transcr., *Salt Spring Island Archives*.

⁸⁸⁶ Draycot, “Pawn 883,” 253.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid.

Forest, Mountains, and so-called Wilds, has wrought a pleasanter mode of Life than contact with the majority of humans.⁸⁸⁸

Draycot's description of turning wholly inward, cutting off his many civic ties, and ostracizing himself presents a sort of tragic antithesis to Tolkein's "Scouring of the Shire." Upon the Hobbits' return from Mordor (which saga was part war memoir), they found a gang of ruffians installed ruling the place, so banded together and cast them out through strength of arms.⁸⁸⁹ Draycot, the man who had looked directly into the eye of Sauron at Ypres and escaped unscathed, found that a band of ruffians had taken over the civic affairs of his nascent community but ultimately chose not to fight.⁸⁹⁰ Broken by the war, and broken by the peace, Draycot retreated to the forest as Christie and Munroe had done (and McLaren too, but much less permanently).

Of course, many returned men often fought for change across the country, with the Winnipeg General Strike being a prime example, but, just as often, the returned men were – like Draycot – bewildered by a situation that they had had nothing to do with bringing about, and found themselves incapable of altering it.⁸⁹¹ It became increasingly difficult to know which side was which in the hyper-

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁹ J.R.R. Tolkein, *The Lord of the Rings: Part Three The Return of the King* (New York: Harpercollins, (1955) 1994), 334-364.

⁸⁹⁰ Naylor points out that the Canadian Government had, early in the war, turned to authoritarian tactics that might have been thought the worst examples of the "Prussian" bureaucratic excess, including the "repressive instrument [of] orders-in-council under the War Measures Act. The same act – and particularly the draconian Defence of Canada Regulations, which were instituted a week before the declaration of war in 1939 – signalled a return to precisely the same kind of regime." (A regime established by no less a devoted labour arbitrator as Mackenzie King). James Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism: The Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation and the Dream of a Working-Class Future* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 285. See also, Desmond Morton, "'Kicking and Complaining:' Demobilization Riots in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1918-1919," *The Canadian Historical Review* 61, 3 (1980): 334-360.

⁸⁹¹ Bercuson finds that, even though the "veterans were a disillusioned lot and the socialists knew it," both the pro-labour (communist) Strike Committee and the reactionary (fascist) Committee of the 1000, a group of industrialists and "leading citizens" who came together in response to the strike in an effort to get everything moving again, were able to employ a goodly number of former soldiers. Despite the claims of the strikers that veterans "represented 35,000 against 1,000," the Committee of 1000 was able to quickly create a replacement city police force, a sort of capitalist sponsored gendarme which has no readily apparent corollary in Canadian History, essentially a group of deputized men which included veterans. Even before the strike was underway, soldiers were willing to riot at the threat of the "enemy-alien" intrusion into Canadian affairs and smash the offices of the Socialist Party of Canada. These men had been promised "a new Jerusalem after the holocaust of blood" in the

polarized labour clashes of the day.⁸⁹² Later in the 1920s the PPCLI, at the beginning of their Permanent Force iteration, were called out as strike-breakers on numerous occasions.⁸⁹³

For many of the veterans themselves, disillusionment and disappearance were always lurking just around the corner. Battle exhaustion and the psychological, emotional and biological trauma of war were a fact to most he made it home. Just as individual response to killing situation was widely varied, so too were the long-term effects of these traumas.⁸⁹⁴ Most resumed civil life and got on with it, building what they wanted to build and integrating into the wider community. Many others did not, but their voices tend to be muted. A generation had been scarred and mutilated for life.

Fate had a worse death in store for Agar Adamson than was the case of many of the deaths he had seen at the war, and that he had helped to cause. Being atomized has the benefit of being quick (as

words of the Ontario Labour News, but those in Winnipeg found that it did not exist. Throughout the month of June a sort of proxy war began escalating until the Committee of 1000 and the government attempted a “half-bungled and probably illegal operation” to arrest strike leaders including A.A. Heaps, John Queen and R.B. Russell, before attempting to restart street-car service. The strikers stopped the streetcar, and set it on fire, whence the riot act was read. This occurred on “Bloody Saturday,” 21 June 1919. The RNWP fired into the crowd after an officer was beaten. The men of the 27th Battalion, who had had their demobilization delayed in order to be “johnny-on-the-spot” if the full flame of war should erupt in the epicentre of growing labour unrest, arrived and machine-guns were surreptitiously shipped to the battalion in crates marked “regimental baggage.” David Bercuson, *Confrontation in Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, (1977) 1990), 143-50, 163-74. Kramer and Mitchell note that during the “Flag-Flapping stage” of the strike, the Committee of 1000 offered free rides home from demobilization by commandeering 1000 automobiles. “Felicitously, this arrangement just happened to permit drivers to recruit returned soldiers for the militia, in case the Strike turned nasty. Should the soldiers agree, they didn’t have to go home at all, but could be taken directly from the train to the Minto Barracks for demobilization and then to the Osborne Barracks, where the militia waited.” Reinhold Kramer and Tom Mitchell, *When the State Trembled: How A.J. Andrews and the Citizens’ Committee Broke the Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, (2010) 2014), 107.

⁸⁹² Scotland finds that unemployment gripped many of the returned veterans after the war and that they were particularly susceptible to it for a number of reasons. “The Notion that veterans reintegrated relatively easily into the postwar economy endures, a misconception which helps explain why their struggles have not been considered relevant to the discussion of the war’s wider meaning. Despite this misunderstanding, however, returned men were particularly affected by the 1920 downturn and the subsequent unemployment throughout the interwar era.” Jonathan Scotland, *And the Men Returned: Canadian Veterans and the Aftermath of the Great War*, PhD Dissertation, The University of Western Ontario, 2015, 151-2.

⁸⁹³ On 15 Apr 1931, for example, the PPCLI companies in Winnipeg provided “Guards in Winnipeg on account of unemployed and communists.” On 1 May 1932, 1 Officer and 52 Other Ranks from B Company were sent to Vancouver, “on special duty in aid of Civil Power. They did not disembark and returned [to Esquimalt] on the same day.” “Regimental history W.W. I Part II: 1919-1938,” 16(1.4)-1.

⁸⁹⁴ On the British example see, Peter Leese, “Problems Returning Home: The British Psychological Casualties of the Great War,” *The Historical Journal* 40, 4 (1997): 1055-1067.

he wrote of Papineau's death, "poor fellow. He could not have known what hit him"), so too with many critical shots.⁸⁹⁵ But Adamson survived the war only to die of exposure after the experimental plane that he was in crash-landed in the Irish Sea, and he spent three hours therein before being rescued. As Norm Christie writes, "the exposure was too much for the hard-living 63-year-old and he never totally recovered."⁸⁹⁶ At least he had been able to reunite with those he loved, even if he did ultimately choose the life of single man amongst high-society: "Perhaps he had become addicted to life on the edge and nights of gambling, wining and dining was all he wanted."⁸⁹⁷ This choice, to continue to live on the edge, ultimately led to his living what Herman Melville described as the ultimate psychic torture; to be alive and alone floating in the unfathomable sea with only a faint hope between you and infinity. As Melville wrote of Pip, the unfortunate not-quite-slave-boy of the doomed *Pequod* who was left after falling out of the chase-boat on the second occasion, "in calm weather, to swim in the open ocean is as easy to the practised swimmer as to ride in a spring-carriage ashore. But the awful lonesomeness is intolerable. The intense concentration of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity, my God! who can tell it?"⁸⁹⁸ And Pip endured this in tropical climes whereas Adamson, who had swum in the trenches on multiple occasions during the war, endured the torture of the Irish Sea for three hours. His death was simply another of the rings of irreconcilable sorrow emanating outwards in time from the war, and one of a seemingly endless number that it caused. As Mabel wrote,

I thought if he had limited means, he would economize in his eating and drinking and smoking, to be able to give more money away; but it was useless because he was so popular everyone wanted to dine and wine him. Also he knew that I was here to pay legitimate bills which I did. It was not lack of affection that kept us apart during these years, it was an effort on my part to

⁸⁹⁵ Death was usually presented to loved ones as a quick, wherever possible. Adamson, for example, stresses the relative painlessness of Buller's passing. "It was on the Second of June when the enemy had entered our front line in considerable force and were bombing down on our right, that he personally ordered a counter flanking attack which proved successful and was at the time kneeling on the parapet that he was hit through the heart by a bullet. The Medical Officer of the Regiment was beside him and he assures me that his noble sacrifice was without pain." Adamson to Lady Buller, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 12 June 1916, 186.

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, ed. N.M. Christie, 364.

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁸ Herman Melville, *Moby Dick or The Whale* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., (1851) 1976), 408-9.

make him realize how bad it was for him to lead the life of constant dinners, etc. – what he was doing. What I did not realize was the kindness to other people that these same entertainments gave. What I might have done was to have lived with him and let him be happy in his own way. Then the end would have been the same, only I should have no regrets, but it is almost impossible to watch someone you love doing things that you know are ruining their health and say nothing. I always hoped against hope that he would come back to me and lead a simpler life – If he had only recovered from this last illness. I think he would. But it was not to be and there is a blank in my life that will never be filled.⁸⁹⁹

Everywhere we encounter terrible gaps rent by the war, families destroyed and infinite sorrow.

Adamson died as he had lived with the regiment, on the edge of an unfathomable abyss.

Eventually, Draycot reconciled the killing and dying with the rest of his life. Like Christie and Munroe, he ultimately regained a semblance of the peace he had known before the war through the kinship of animals and nature. He sent hand-illustrated Christmas cards to all and sundry illustrating the doings of the local squirrels, great blue herons, racoons, owls and other woodland friends: “Our life exempt from public haunt finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.”⁹⁰⁰ He published articles such as “Fossil arthropods from B.C. Pleistocene Fossil Beetles and tregetal Remains in interglacial deposits, a summary report.”⁹⁰¹ He found that, when looking back, no one day during the war constituted the worst day of his life. Rather it was a spider bite that nearly killed him in Africa, and not the sniper bullets that nearly killed him in France that he chose to remember.⁹⁰² Relying on a true story that predated the war, Draycot could steer the conversation away from some of the harsher truths he regales in monograph form.

Despite his embittering war experience, Draycot spoke of his abilities, underappreciated as they were, with considerable pride for the rest of his days; he also extends this pride to the men of the

⁸⁹⁹ Mabel Adamson quoted in, Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 29 Dec 1929, 365.

⁹⁰⁰ Draycot, Christmas Card, 1949, 31(4)-4.

⁹⁰¹ Walter Draycot, “Fossil arthropods from B.C. Pleistocene Fossil Beetles and tregetal Remains in interglacial deposits, a summary report,” manuscript, 26-21-17, NVA.

⁹⁰² Dave Jenneson, “Reviewing 100 Years of Change: Walter Draycott interviewed,” 23 Feb 1983, *North Shore News*, C2, 31(4)-4.

regiment when describing the panache with which they had fought. He contrasts their actions with a more appropriately chivalric time and points directly to the humour of the Comedy Company:

Who created many a cerebral volcano by their antics on improvised platforms in the war zone, and later in peace time. And who remembers the secret organization within the regiment of its early days, known by the absurd title of “The Mounted Submarines” which name they chalked up on the walls of villages wherein they were billeted. As we plainly see there is yet much to be told. But it must be written by “One who was there,” and especially by, “One of the Rank and File.” History informs us William of Normandy Conquered England. HE did no such thing! His MEN did.⁹⁰³

Note here that Draycot is specifically linking the antics of the mounted submarines with the conquering done by William the Conqueror, and his men. Although this link might not seem immediately obvious, Draycot realizes that the killing is a product of the morale and humour of the men who actively sought out amusement and catharsis such as that provided by McLaren *et al.* on stage. Humour steadied men outside of battle such that they could resume their primary occupation with a smile on their face or a song on their lips. Draycot is intimating that this was also true in William’s time.⁹⁰⁴

McLaren further describes how the fighting men of the Dumbells, and the fighting men they entertained, continued to frame their experiences at war with stories of games, comradeship, hunting, partying, and the show. In London, Ontario, the Dumbells got well into the sauce with a group of R.C.R. officers, whose regiment had also been part of the 7th Brigade since they were both transferred to the Canadian Corps in November 1915: “After the show, some of the R.C.R. officers used to stage a wonderful midnight ‘sport,’ in north London called ‘The Fox Hunt.’ ... “The ‘fox’ was given a bottle of scotch, which represented the fox’s brush or tail... [and] released five minutes before the hounds... [who] were unleashed and had to try to locate the fox, while always on the run, emitting a continuous

⁹⁰³ Draycot, “Copy...30...,” 26-23-22, *North Vancouver Archives*.

⁹⁰⁴ Specifically, this story reminds the author of a fan-tribute episode of Star Trek: The Original Series called “The Relic of Kandahar,” produced by most of the HQ staff of the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team in 2008. They had the local Afghan Police and Army soldiers play the Klingons. Two parts of the episode were completed and uploaded to a private Facebook group, but production stalled and most of it was never completed.

and sustained ‘baying’ like hounds.”⁹⁰⁵ Having hunted Germans for the English in France, they got drunk and hunted each other English style through London. The war had given them licence, freedom and name recognition, and impelled them to hunt in earnest; as recompense for their service they got to have fun as they saw fit. This is the same thing that McLaren describes regarding the “battle” of Steenvoerde. To host such a hunt is to relive the best parts of the experience of war. Like McLaren’s troupes’ performances, it had helped them to come to terms with the other kind of hunting that had lately occupied them.

The killing was the inescapable, ineluctable fact of their existence at the front, so central to their occupation that it often did not need to be mentioned. In their capacity as entertainers, the killing was a non-starter from a comedic point of view, with the significant exceptions that have here been outlined. Thus, the comedy tended to focus on what soldiers wanted: booze, Aladdin’s cave, seeing the comeuppance of the disagreeable regimental personalities that always seemed to outrank them, and – most importantly – women. The killing informed these shows but it had to stay off stage if the show was to be a success. The same was true for much of their correspondence and remembrance of war. The Comedy Company and Dumbells, through songs like “The Spaniard that Blighted My Life” and “Dirty Work,” talked about killing in the same way as those who were describing taking the life of the enemy such as Christie, Munroe and Papineau. Take, for example, W.C.R. Bradford’s description of a platoon raid gone wrong: “Sixteen Platoon arranged a body snatching raid for identification purposes. The raid was *well cased* but, through an unfortunate accident, the German outpost was alarmed so the raiding party had to retire. [Emphasis added]”⁹⁰⁶ The language that they use was that of criminals or burglars

⁹⁰⁵ McLaren, *JW*, 53. The London Hunt Club, founded in 1885 was originally a fox-hunting club that wore the uniforms of the 1st Hussars, the London (Ontario) Cavalry Regiment. London Historic Sites Committee, “Glenmore.” *Local Historical Sites* <http://www.lpl.ca/book/export/html/16744> (31 Aug 2017).

⁹⁰⁶ W.C.R. Bradford, “Just One of Many,” undated (1964-5), 31(3)-2.

“casing” a target, the same language used in the song “Dirty Work,” or the comedic opera of Aladdin’s cave.⁹⁰⁷

By focusing on those legendary characters who have here been encountered, men who each contributed to the official mythos of the PPCLI in some fashion, many of whom survived the war relatively whole in mind and body, a large category of those soldiers who survived the war has not been dealt with; those who simply disappeared after it. For example, we have from McLaren and Cunningham that P.D. Ham “went bad” after the war, but no further information is available. Whatever the pair of Comedy Company veterans knew of their erstwhile companion, they did not record it in their reminiscences. The same went for Archie McLean, a Corporal who had been chosen from the ranks to affix the laurel wreath upon the Camp Colour at Bramshott Camp when the regiment returned to England. Letters written hopefully to anyone who might have contact with McLean went unanswered.⁹⁰⁸ Many others did not respond, or had seen their memory fade so far in the half century that had passed since they had been with the regiment in France, that not even a picture could be dug up by the next of kin.⁹⁰⁹

Other men traded on their legendary status as warriors with the PPCLI, such as the imposter Sylvester Long, who styled himself “Chief Long Lance” of the Blood but was born mixed-race (black) in South Carolina during the Jim Crow era. He invented an entire persona based on his being a veteran of the PPCLI, and expanded his legend out of all proportion to his service (although he was at Vimy Ridge in 1917). After a long career as a journalist, tour-guide, spokesman for the First Nations of the plains,

⁹⁰⁷ See also, Gordon Williams, *British Theatre in the Great War: A Revaluation* (New York: Continuum, 2003). 85-89.

⁹⁰⁸ As Bastedo wrote: “We presume that your late husband was 504253 A. McLean who joined the Pats from the Engineers on Nov. 18/16 and continued with them as a corporal until Mar. 2/19... if you have your husband’s number or know his period of service with the Pats please advise us by an early mail.” W.E. Bastedo to Mrs. Archie McLean, 29 Dec 1965, 31(3)-9.

⁹⁰⁹ R.M Brown, for example described himself as “just [a] plain mud slogging Pat.” Alternatively, Lt-Col. James Husband, who had originally enlisted with the regiment as a Private and won the MC at Vimy, sent back two pages of reminiscences focusing on the parties at St. James Palace, saying nothing whatsoever about the fighting. R.M. Brown (246702), correspondence with Cole, 1975, 31(11)-2. Lt-Col. James Husband Carvosso (51116), correspondence with Bastedo, 1964, 31(26)-2.

movie-star, pilot and well-dressed-libertine, Long killed himself after he found he could not reconcile the legends he invented with the reality of his life.⁹¹⁰

Men tended to shy away from descriptions of killing in their remembrances, especially in later years, and that is why it is so difficult to find – within the PPCLI archives – an account of Passchendaele, the epitome of all the horror that could be wrought upon men by offensive warfare; men remember it as death everywhere, which made no sense but was. Allegedly, Talbot Papineau’s last recorded statement was an acknowledgement of the fact of the battle: “You know Hughie, this is Suicide.”⁹¹¹ But even if death was the soldier’s lot, his first duty was to himself, to keep himself alive; to plead for help as he got sucked into the mud; to make his way back if he got himself a blighty, to take cover and run when necessary, to rest when too exhausted to return to the front. But this duty ran against the necessity of action and death, as men were forced into the battle-space and then led by the example and sacrifice of leaders like Papineau and Mackenzie. Their officers’ sacrifice compelled them forward, even if they were more likely to huddle into the ground after their death. It was an insoluble moral situation that was usually characterized by the silence of its participants.⁹¹² It might be added that examples compelling

⁹¹⁰ Donald B. Smith, *Long Lance: The True Story of an Impostor* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 36-44, 223-231. See also, Long, Sylvester (a.k.a. Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance), 31(2)-8. Long’s service record indicates he served with the Battalion at Vimy and was later taken on as a clerk on staff where he finished the war as a staff-sergeant Sylvester Chahuska. Long-Lange (1033198) Long-Lance, Buffalo Child (AKA), “Casualty Form,” Service Record, RG150, box 5729, file 66, LAC. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=536902> (18 Aug 2017).

⁹¹¹ Niven quoted in, Williams, *PPCLI: 1914-84*, 24. It is interesting to note here that Niven does not repeat this line in any of the extensive collection of material preserved at the regimental archives. As Gault’s semi-official historian, Williams had access to all of the founder’s material as well as personal access to Niven. But it is impossible to say if Niven and Williams are recording the fact of Papineau’s last words.

⁹¹² Of course many did speak try to expiate their memories of Passchendaele through the catharsis of writing, and Will Bird is the most oft cited example. His account brings the horrors faced by the 42nd Battalion into stark and terrifying focus. Bird, *And We Go On*, 65-85. Tim Cook quotes the Patricia James McBride as recalling his pre-battle jitters, “Many strange thoughts come into a man’s mind. The next few hours might be his last in this world and he thinks of Home and the ones he loves. It is an awful feeling.” He then noted that the pre-assault bombardment had not succeeded in clearing the Germans from their objectives on Meetchele ridge and that they were subjected to an incredible volume of fire in a bog of lethal mud. Describing the aftermath of the first phase of the battle, he portrays “a nightmarish mess of rotting corpses, lung-searing gas, and glutinous mud, over which hovered the

individuals to their duty went both ways on the officer/other rank divide, and Agar Adamson specifically cites the actions of his men at Sanctuary Wood as his reason for choosing to “stick it.” When Adamson assumed command at the regiment it was after the devastation of Sanctuary Wood, and he did not want the job: “I sometimes feel as if I must chuck it, as organization and detail as you know very well is the last thing I am any good at, but when I think of the way the men stick it and refused to surrender, I decide to try to carry on.”⁹¹³ The example of the men made Adamson want to live up to the fighting ideals of the regiment, and lead them as best he could into the fighting that remained.

Patricia’s liked to boast that they never lost a trench during defensive battle, often pointing to the nickname Stonewall: this boast was not altogether accurate (although it may be true that they never lost a battalion trench system without being ordered to retire). At Frezenburg, for example, the whole front-line was captured, and the British established a new front-line in what had been their supports behind Bellewaerde Lake. However, the retreat from the front-line had been, at least, on something of the regiment’s own terms. Having been ordered to fall back during the battle, Hugh Niven – then commanding – responded that he could not, as that would mean abandoning the wounded. So, the regiment stayed on until the wounded had been evacuated and a new unit rotated in. Similarly, at Sanctuary Wood, much of the front-line system was captured by the enemy, although it was retaken later in the month during the determined British-Canadian counterattack. As Knight, Draycot *et al.* point out, the reality was often far more fluid, less clear-cut than it is typically presented in histories of the battles, as individuals fought it out and figured it out as best they could. Nevertheless, the reputation for not having lost a trench came in handy during defensive battles at places like Sanctuary Wood, and ensured that the remnants of the Originals and the University Company men, after dying *en masse*, were able to stand during the interstitial killing moment of the infantry assault, flamethrowers and all.

ever-present spectre of death... Some of the dead were later found having gnawed their fingers off in their pain-induced madness.” Tim Cook, *Shock Troops*, 348, 353.

⁹¹³ Adamson, 9 Jun 1916, 185.

As we have seen, the reasons that they chose to “stick it” at moments that required killing, why men killed at war, boil down to two: compulsion and impulsion. The impulsive part was born out of some form of love – for the idea of their mothers, for the memory of their wives, for the presentation of self that a fighting position conveys, and (most importantly) for the true comrades amongst whom they found themselves. This love led to the hot-blooded savage killing rage of battle and the cold professionalism of the sniper taking the life of enemy soldiers as “part of the game.”

As Munroe writes of Hattrick, who died trying to win leave to England to marry Etta, “he was not the only one who joined the ranks to find an English wife.”⁹¹⁴ If, prior to the war, they were unmarried for whatever reason, their status as fighting soldiers opened up a world of opportunities behind the lines, opportunities lampooned by the ladies of the Comedy Company: opportunities which seldom came to fruition, as was probably the case of George Bronquest (next paragraph). By making light of that which impelled men to kill at war, they reaffirmed the ideas that allowed men to kill. Make no mistake, men in and out of uniform tended to see women as impelling them into the ranks, and thus forward to the fight and kill. Ross King tells of the “the Order of the White Feather” in Gianelli’s hometown Toronto, for example.⁹¹⁵ The Sinclair wrote to Bunyan that: “I have a sister – one of those irrepressible Tomboy Kind and she persists in calling me a slacker for allowing a week to elapse before signing on. She is too bloodthirsty for every time she writes she wants to know how many more scalps I have hanging from my belt. – Here I’m off again on the old stuff.”⁹¹⁶ Sinclair provides a particularly extreme example, but throughout the writings to women here studied, men tended to position themselves in the role of killer and tended to read an affirmation (if only tacit) of that purpose in their letters from home.

⁹¹⁴ Munroe, *Mopping Up*, 197.

⁹¹⁵ Ross King, *Defiant Spirits: The Modernist Revolution of the Group of Seven*, (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 2011), 187.

⁹¹⁶ Sinclair to Bunyan, 18 Nov 1915, 16(24.1)-5.

Soldiers live in a narrow zone of death between two prisons, and the second reason that men killed was that they were compelled to, sometimes by the brutal methods of military justice. George Bronquest provides an excellent example of this compulsion into the killing zone, and furthermore demonstrates how killing prowess inside the line did not necessarily translate into “fair” treatment outside of it. A long-suffering private soldier who had valiantly taken life on several occasions, Bronquest serves as a flesh-and-blood tale of the military’s power to torture a soldier to death for such mild sins as talking back to an officer. This was how discipline was maintained and how the regimental (and higher) structures that relentlessly compelled men into the killing fields operated. Bronquest won the DCM at Frezenburg for his “good work on a Vickers machine gun” and also helped to repel a sizable bombing attack on a PPCLI platoon-sized listening post just in front of the trenches: “Geo[rge] took up his position in the front-line immediately behind and slightly above the listening post and kept up a rapid fire on the German front-line just a few yards away, making any raid impossible.”⁹¹⁷ He was offered promotion but wanted leave, which he was denied, despite two years’ uninterrupted service at the front. The reason that he wanted leave was likely to get married, as Clark refers to “pressing reasons to visit England.”⁹¹⁸ By the spring of 1917, while the whole Canadian Corps trained hard for the upcoming Vimy offensive, Bronquest was pretty thoroughly fed up with “the everlasting, arduous routine.”⁹¹⁹ While working a sanitation detail, the medical officer ordered him to clean up a pile of discarded rotting cabbage leaves, and there ensued an argument between the two, beginning when the private said, “I didn’t come here to be a scavenger for ~~these filthy Frenchmen~~ the French civilians,” before escalating to the point that Bronquest was ““swore lustily [fuck] and applied some unsavoury army epithets to the recently arrived

⁹¹⁷ Lum Clark, “The Lone Leave of Geo Bronquest,” undated, 2, 31(9)-2. See also, Bronquist, G. 1346, Court Martial, 2 Mar 1917, RG150 - Ministry of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada (OMFC), series 8, file 649-B-15079, reel T-8654, LAC. The two versions of the story differ considerably, and the details of Bronquest’s employment are taken from the court martial records.

⁹¹⁸ Clark, “Loan Leave of Geo Bronquest,” 2.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid., 3.

medical officer.”⁹²⁰ The incident ended, after he demanded a court martial instead of being tried summarily, with his being sentenced to 90 days FP No. 1.⁹²¹ Even though the 7th Brigade Commander, A.C. (“Batty Mac”) Macdonell, commuted thirty days for his valour on previous occasions, Bronquest was forced to undergo two full months of that “hideous old practice of strenuous drill with full kit and pack filled with bricks.”⁹²² This torture did not prevent him from front-line service, nor did it dampen his ardour to seek out the enemy and kill them. Bronquest died after going underground and over the top at Vimy.⁹²³ As Bruneau wrote, “George could always be found when there was deep trouble.”⁹²⁴ The consummate fighting infantry soldier, Bronquest discovered that ability inside the line was no guarantee of fair treatment outside of it. This betrayal of *thémis* impelled men to kill on the battlefield. His example is like that of Draycot, going out into No Man’s Land after being compelled to return to the lines without a rest.

As age enfeebled the eyes, after the Second World War especially and into the 60s and 70s, men tended to remember their service with pride, their manifest of anecdotes and stories refined to a short list, and their personal feelings about the war long decided. Sometimes, often, the detail was lost but the import remained as clear as ever. Often, they remembered the war wistfully and lamented the passing of their halcyon days at war, a phrase that should be an oxymoron, but is not. Only by living through the extreme turbulence of war could many appreciate the moments of peace that followed. As Bradford said, proposing a toast to the regiment “Gentlemen: I am privileged to propose a toast to our Regiment in which we served for probably the best days of our lives – days which we will cherish as long

⁹²⁰ Ibid.

⁹²¹ Ibid., 5.

⁹²² Ibid., 6.

⁹²³ The Circumstances of Casualty Register states that, “during the operations on VIMY RIDGE, this soldier was wounded in the wrist by enemy shrapnel. He was ordered to proceed to the rear, but on his way out was again wounded by shell fire and died shortly after.” Circumstances of Casualty Register, Private George Bronquest (1346), RG150, box 158, vol. 14. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/mass-digitized-archives/circumstances-death-registers/Pages/item.aspx?PageID=35379> (9 Aug 2017).

⁹²⁴ Clark, “Loan Leave of Geo Bronquest,” 7.

as we live – days in which we lived, saw and felt, intensified, the complete course of human actions and emotions.”⁹²⁵ Although war was certainly the worst of things, its survivors tend to have ambivalent feelings towards the worthwhileness of the experience. Many, indeed most, spoke of it as the pinnacle of their whole life’s experience, something that could never be equalled in civil life.⁹²⁶

For Bradford, the mark of bravery was not necessarily a killing act, but an attempt to save the lives of his comrades. During the retreat from the “well cased” raid described above, he recalls that “a member of the cover party got tangled up in the barbed wire. Six German machine guns were spraying the area at the time. The Corporal went back to help him out and this is what he was told: ‘Get to hell out of here! Do you want to get killed too?’”⁹²⁷ However, even though Bradford’s story was one of immediate bravery that did not involve killing the enemy, the two forms of decoration-worthy action, “service” and “valour” (in Gianelli’s precise phrase), were of course linked. The man in question, Private McCann (246285), was not hit by a single round, and survived the war after being wounded and struck off strength at Amiens/Parvillers. As the Bible’s (and Torah’s and Qur’an’s) Abraham found out, sometimes sacrificial bravery does not end with the consummation of the sacrifice. Plenty of men from England who had moved to Canada, Canadians, and others also learned these hard lessons about power, bravery, and killing, namely that to wield power it is to be threatened by it. But if it was true in the aggregate that men tended to do anything it took to survive, it was also true that nothing men could do would assure their survival, and that if they stuck around long enough, they would have to shun safety and openly seek out men to inflict death upon.

⁹²⁵ W.C.R. Bradford, “A Toast to the Regiment,” undated, 31(3)-2.

⁹²⁶ As Vance writes, “The speeches are cut from the same cloth. They begin with a rejection of traditional assumptions regarding war, in terms that might almost be called modernist. Yet they end with an affirmation of the value of the conflict and a restatement of the notions that the traditional view had stressed: the glory of sacrifice for an ideal and a seemingly piety towards the fallen who had died for liberty and their country. All the code words are there. Despite the muddy burrows, the monotony, the cruel agony, war brought out the finest qualities of humanity.” Jonathan F. Vance, “Remembering Armageddon,” in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David Clark MacKenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), .

⁹²⁷ Bradford, “One of Many,” undated, 31(3)-2.

The foundation of the work of both Marshall and Grossman – two generations of soldier-scholars that have sought to better prepare men for battle by understanding men’s behaviour in it – that roughly three out of four men would not fire in battle even when directly threatened by the enemy – may be true, but what we have seen is that killing is far more *situationally* dependant than it is *individually* dependant. If a given soldier chose not to fire in one engagement, that did not preclude his firing in other scenarios, especially if motivated by the loss of comrades, a near permanent fixture of battle on the Western Front. For those who found themselves in situations auspicious to killing, men would kill, mechanically. Accounts of Christie firing at the defensives stand at Frezenberg or Draycot at Sanctuary Wood, as well as Lynch’s description of his company firing on the retreating enemy at Jigsaw Wood, are but three examples. Moreover, soldiers were compelled ceaselessly to be as “offensive” as possible, and during periods such as the Hundred Days, they were largely successful in so doing, if at extremely heavy cost to the Corps. Whether or not they approved of “live and let live” in quiet sectors, they were faced with many an active sector over the course of the war. A soldier’s response to the myriad threats and situations posed to them on the battlefield – ranging from unarmed prisoners, to hideously wounded and dying men, and to those in their own ranks who made their life hell – killing was largely a matter of individual discretion, with the significant caveat that most seemed to have eventually (if they stuck around long enough) chose and/or been forced into situations where they would have to and want to kill. It was all in the game. That the game was unimaginably awful did not diminish the fact that killing was its goal, and many managed to find reason to enjoy themselves during it (or parts of it at least).

Grossman points out some of the biological and psychological implications war as a job of work, or a deadly game. He goes so far as to argue that the idea of the war as a game is true in that one experiences many of the same feelings in games and in war: “We were looking at a fundamental question: Is the fear that you feel in the Super Bowl the same fear as the fear you feel in combat? The

answer, it turns out, is yes. That's huge. Anything that we can use in the athletic world we can use in combat. That's one of the greatest revolutions of our time in improving performance on the battlefield."⁹²⁸ The killing, as Gianelli and everybody else here studied points out, was all in the game, ultimately the point of the game. Indeed, the idea is not as revolutionary as Grossman might suspect, and has its ideational roots in British sporting culture prior to the war. Take for example a training publication issued during the war in platoon fighting: "The First essential in a soldier is the fighting spirit, controlled by discipline."⁹²⁹ This fighting spirit was fostered at the lowest possible level, such as Victor Gianelli did by sharing out his boxes of goodies amongst the men of his section, and remaining at the front to suffer together with them despite the exceptionally high turnover: "Much may be done to foster the spirit even of sections, if appeal is made to the genius for discipline and comradeship which is inherent in the British race."⁹³⁰ This fighting spirit was to be, and was in fact, fostered by sport and games: "In all national games men of British race submit with enthusiasm to training and discipline for the sake of the side: they have an inborn instinct that makes them naturally work for the side and play the game."⁹³¹ Furthermore, the desire to play the game must be understood by all troops to be the

⁹²⁸ Grossman quoted in, Adam Linehan, "This is Your Brain on War," 18 Jun 2016. *Task & Purpose* <http://taskandpurpose.com/this-is-your-brain-on-war> (17 Aug 2017).

⁹²⁹ "S.S. 143 The Training and Employment of Platoons, 1918," General Staff, February 1918, 9, *Ley and Lois Smith War, Memory and Popular Culture Research Collection*, The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario.

⁹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹³¹ *Ibid.* References to sporting matches abound in the PPCLI archives of the First World War. From demonstration boxing matches aboard the S.S. *Royal George* (which did not include Jack Munroe, despite the assertions of some) to ridings demonstrations and football matches, it seemed that whenever the battalion was on anything like an extended rest, games would be played. This was true of most units in the BEF and CEF. After their transfer to the 7th Brigade, American games like baseball were played, and there were great tournaments of all types of sport at the Corps level on a number of occasions. At the famous, 1 July 1918, "Dominion Day Canadian Corps Sports Day," for example thirty three separate competitions were held including everything from "Indoor Baseball" to "Running High Jump" and "Clown Competition." The Staff Officer's Indoor Baseball Championship had to be "postponed owing to tactical situation." "Canadian Corps Championships France Dominion Day 1918," pamphlet, *Ley and Lois Smith Research Collection*. The First Canadian Field Ambulance (1 Can Fd. Amb.) was treated to a show "by the Princess Pats. Comedy Company by Kind permission of Lt. Col. Adamson, D.S.O. assisted by the R.C.R. Band by kind permission of Lt. Col. Hill, D.S.O." after their sports day that was held in July 1917. The show was performed after Vimy Ridge, and shortly before they were sent back to the front. Their original pianist, Leonard Young, was a medic and stretcher-bearer who belonged to that 1 Can Fd. Amb. He had already been sent back to the front by the time of the Comedy Company's presentation to his unit, and lost his leg in the intervening Battle of Vimy Ridge. "First

desire to come into contact with the enemy, and kill him: "The use of the rifle must become an instinct, and the aim and object of all ranks must be to come to close quarters with the enemy as quickly as possible."⁹³² The rifle was not the greatest killer on the battlefield, even amongst infantry weapons; machine-guns and grenades both did more to "dislodge" and slaughter the enemy. But the foundation of military musketry was such that no one could mistake the rules of the game, to kill the enemy by fire.

The regiment has continued in war and peace for over a century, and something of the truth of war that the Originals who paraded before the Ric-a-Dam-Doo at Ottawa in 1914 would learn has carried on to the present day.⁹³³ Reflecting upon his experiences embedded with the PPCLI in Afghanistan in 2014, Adam Day sums up the continuities of the regiment's soldiers as killers, and their ultimate purpose at war:

Search Canada's military history and the greatest moments invariably involve young men charging headfirst into high-velocity metal... Why lose 158 lives in this mission? What for? They died to give Afghanistan a better future. Or, rather, a solid shot at a better future. *Maybe*. They died to solidify the NATO alliance and in tribute, essentially, to our southern ally. *Maybe*. They died in an attempt to kill the enemy. *Yes...that makes sense*. That was always the truth on the ground anyway.⁹³⁴

Canadian Field Ambulance Second Annual Field Day, 1917," pamphlet, *ibid*. On sport in British Culture during the War see for example, Thierry Terret and J.A. Mangan, *Sport, Militarism and the Great War: Martial Manliness and Armageddon* (New York: Routledge, 2012). Eliza Riedi and Tony Mason, "'Leather' and the Fighting Spirit: Sport in the British Army in World War I," *Canadian Journal of History* 41, no. 3 (2006): 485-516. Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 162-70.

⁹³² "S.S. 143 The Training of Platoons," 15.

⁹³³ The storied "Camp Colour" or Ric-a-Dam-Do which the PPCLI carried with them to war was once, accidentally, been lit on fire and had long and legendary service with the regiment. See, H.A. Craig to W.E. Bastedo, "memoir," (1964) 31(7)-3. Niven and Jones disagree to the veracity of Niven's story of RSM Fraser waving the flag atop the parapet after being shot in the head at Sanctuary Wood saying that "I always heard the tears attributed to Long John McDermott, who got drunk on guard and shot through them." A.R. Jones, "Inaccuracies as Noted in A First Reading of Colonel Niven's Reminiscences," 31(53.1)-9. The flag was nevertheless an important component to regimental lore, and had a number of marching songs written about it. Adamson recalls parading a new draft of soldiers in front of it after Sanctuary Wood, ensuring that it was marched past each individual soldier who would present arms to it. He states that draft "was much bigger than the remnant of the regiment." Adamson, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 19 June 1916, 14 July 1916, 185, 188. See also, "6 Versions of 'The Ric-A-Dam-Doo,'" 18(3)-1.

⁹³⁴ Adam Day, "Why Things Are Seen: A Story of Blunders, Bombs, Broken Teeth and Bad Ideas," *Legion Magazine*, 1 Jan 2014. <https://legionmagazine.com/en/2014/01/why-things-are-seen-a-story-of-blunders-bombs-broken-teeth-and-bad-ideas/> (17 Aug 2017). Also quoted in, David Pugliese, "Adam Day, Canadian War Correspondent, Friend – Rest in Peace," *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 Jul 2017. <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/adam-day-war-correspondent-friend-rest-in-peace> (17 Aug 2017).

We have seen that the study of why men charge into storms of high velocity metal – why men kill – is a study of their love for one another, and the hot-blooded passion and cold-blooded professionalism that is engendered by the brotherhood of suffering at the core of every battalion.⁹³⁵ The killing made a perverse sense at war, but engendered a culture of silence after it, when it ceased to make sense. The “truth on the ground” proved, for many, to be monstrously difficult to articulate on the resumption of peace.

⁹³⁵ Holmes, for example, describes it as a “mysterious fraternity.” Holmes, *Acts of War*, 31-73.

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Zubkowski, Robert F. *As Long as Faith and Freedom Last: Stories from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry from June 1914 to September 1919*. Calgary: Bunker to Bunker Books, 2003.

Curriculum Vitae:

Ryan Barry Flavelle, CD

Education

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|------------------------------|--|
| PhD History | University of Western Ontario, (defended 2017) |
| Masters of Strategic Studies | University of Calgary, 2011 |
| BA History | University of Calgary, 2007 |

Fields:

Major Field: Canadian Soldiers and the Cultural History of the First World War

Minor Fields: Canada since Confederation, the World Wars, Europe in the Age of Conflict, NATO in Afghanistan 2001-2014.

Theses:

PhD Thesis – *Killing, Combat and the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI): Legendary Soldiers’ Stories of the First World War – 1914-1918* (2018)

MSS Thesis - *The Decline and Fall of Imperialism in Canada: A Cultural Analysis of the Great War* (2011)

Awards, Honours

Canadian Forces Decoration (2012)

Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012)

Canadian Author’s Association Emerging Writer Award (2012)

Longlisted for the *Charles Taylor Prize* (2012)

General Campaign Star (GCS) with bar (2008).

Journal for Military and Strategic Studies (JMSS) Award of Excellence (2007).

Professional Experience

Teachers Assistant – History 1810: Wars that Changed the World (Western University), 2012-2014.

Copy Writer – Update to “Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry” Exhibit, The Military Museums (Calgary), Winter 2012.

Teachers Assistant – HTST 349: Canadian Military History (University of Calgary), 2010.

Grants:

SSHRC Doctoral Research Grant, 2012 (accepted).

SSHRC Doctoral Research Grant, 2010 (declined).

Research Contributions

Refereed Works:

Ryan Flavelle, "Alberta Remittance Men in the Great War," in *The Frontier of Patriotism: Alberta and the First World War*, ed., Adrianna Davies and Jeff Keshan (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2016).

-----, "'Not Enough Food and Too Many Military Police:' Discipline, Food, and the 23rd Reserve Battalion July-Sept 1917," *War and Society*, 35, no. 2 (2016): 92-113.

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Non-Refereed Works and Conferences:

Ryan Flavelle, "Southern Alberta Remittance Men and the Great War," presented at Pierre Savard Annual Conference, April 2014.

-----, "Doug Finley and the Case Against an Elected Senate," *Toronto Star*, 14 May 2013.

-----, "Full Comment: Ryan Flavelle: Nicole Stacey was 'Ready for anything the world could throw at her,'" *National Post*, 21 October 2011.

-----, "The Development of a Canadian National Narrative 1914-1936," presented at S3C Annual Conference, February 2011.

-----, "Exporting Terror: Afghanistan, Canada, and the Changing Nature of the Threat," presented at S3C Annual Conference, March 2010.

-----, "Identity and the Reserves: Making Sense of Individual Identities on Overseas Deployments," presented at *Canadian Reserves on Operations: Lessons Learned Conference*, April 2010.

Keynote Speaker:

Ryan Flavelle, "*The Patrol*: The Importance of Community in coming home," speech given to a Royal Alberta United Services Luncheon, Nov 2011.

-----, "Grand Strategy and Cultural History: Where is the Interface?" speech given at *The Calgary Workshop on the History of Strategy*, The Royal Alberta United Services Institute, July 2011.

-----, "The New Realities of the War in Afghanistan," speech given at S3C Conference Dinner, 2009.